ZABUS

our common shores

NICOBY

EUROPE COMICS

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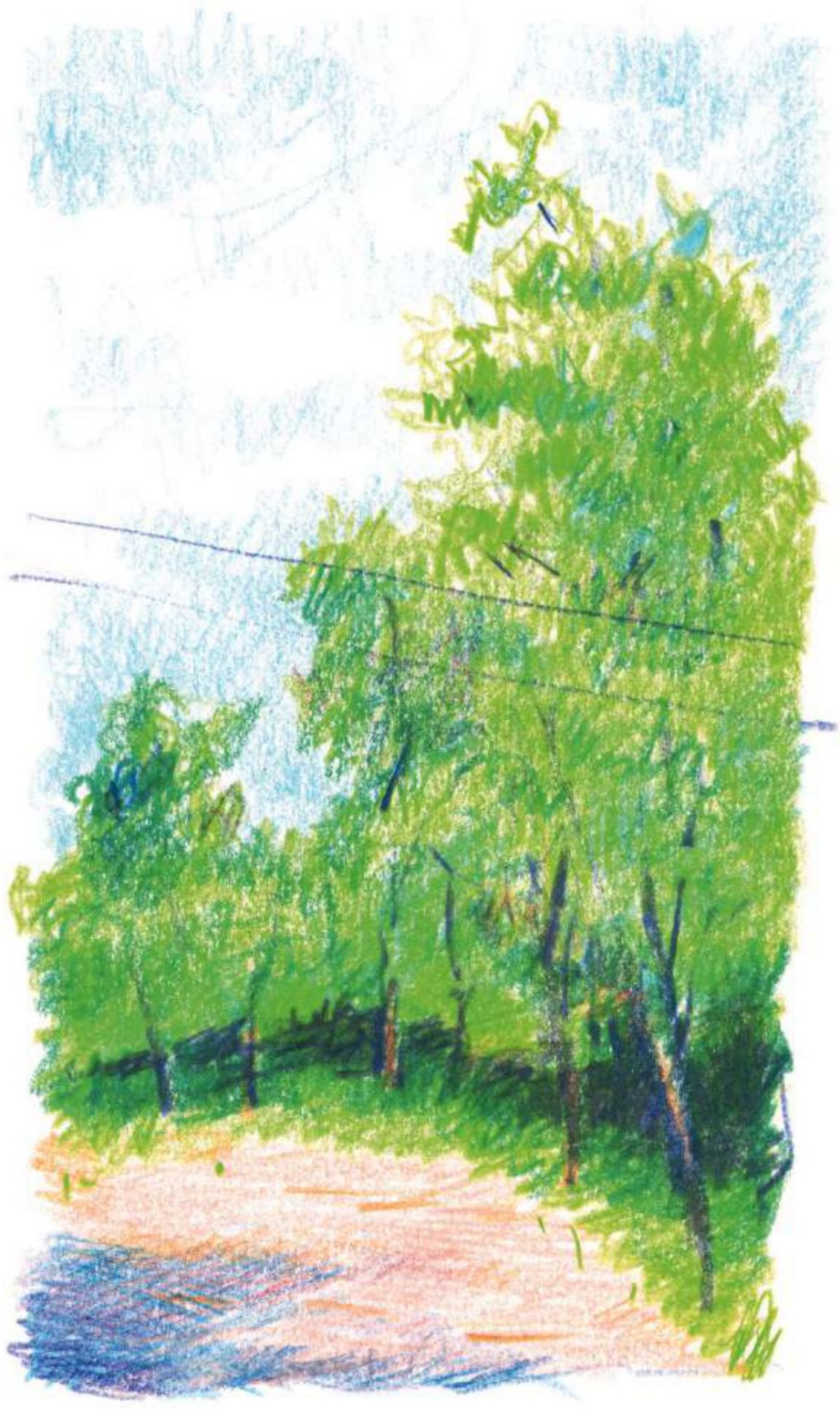
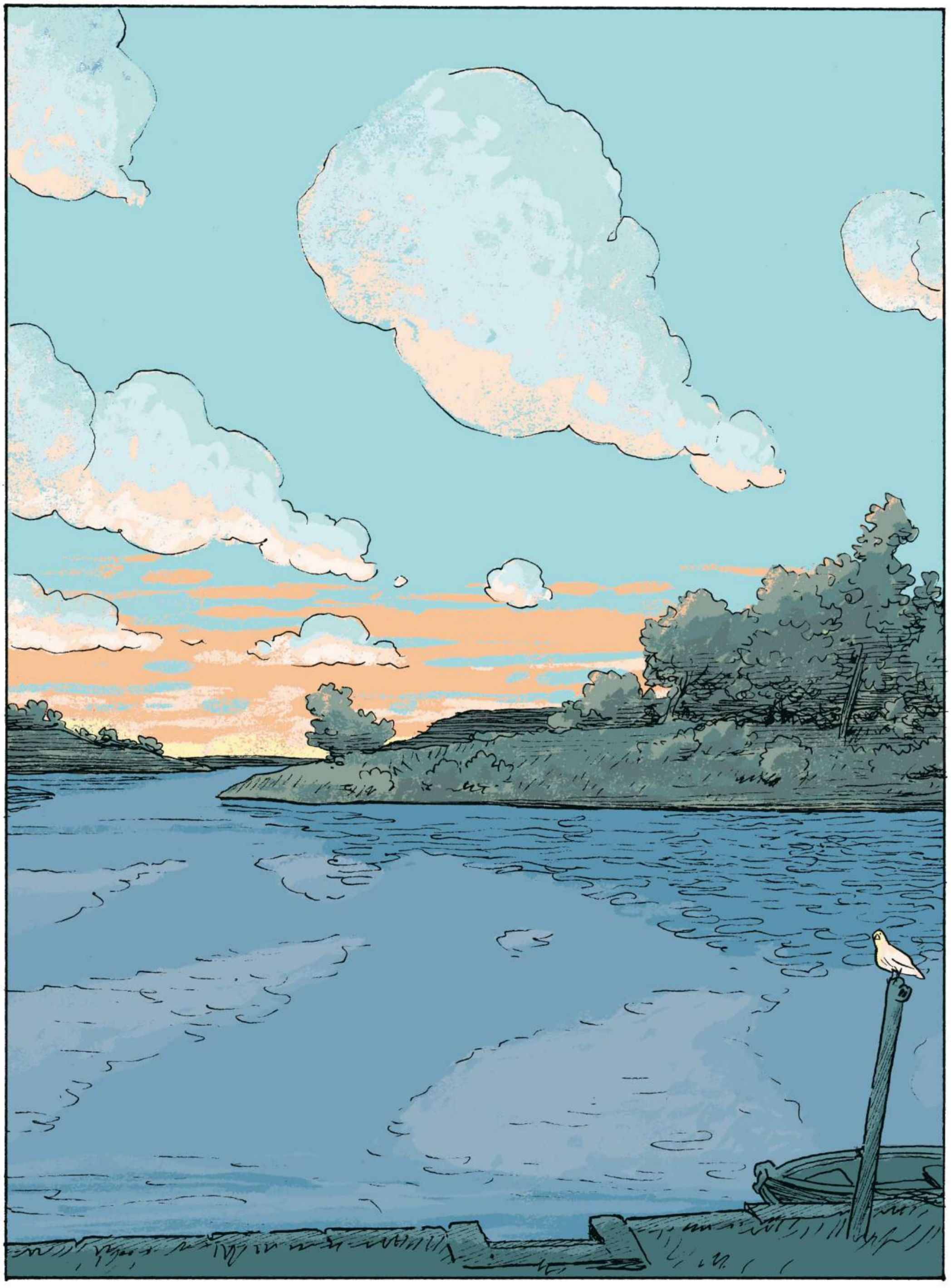
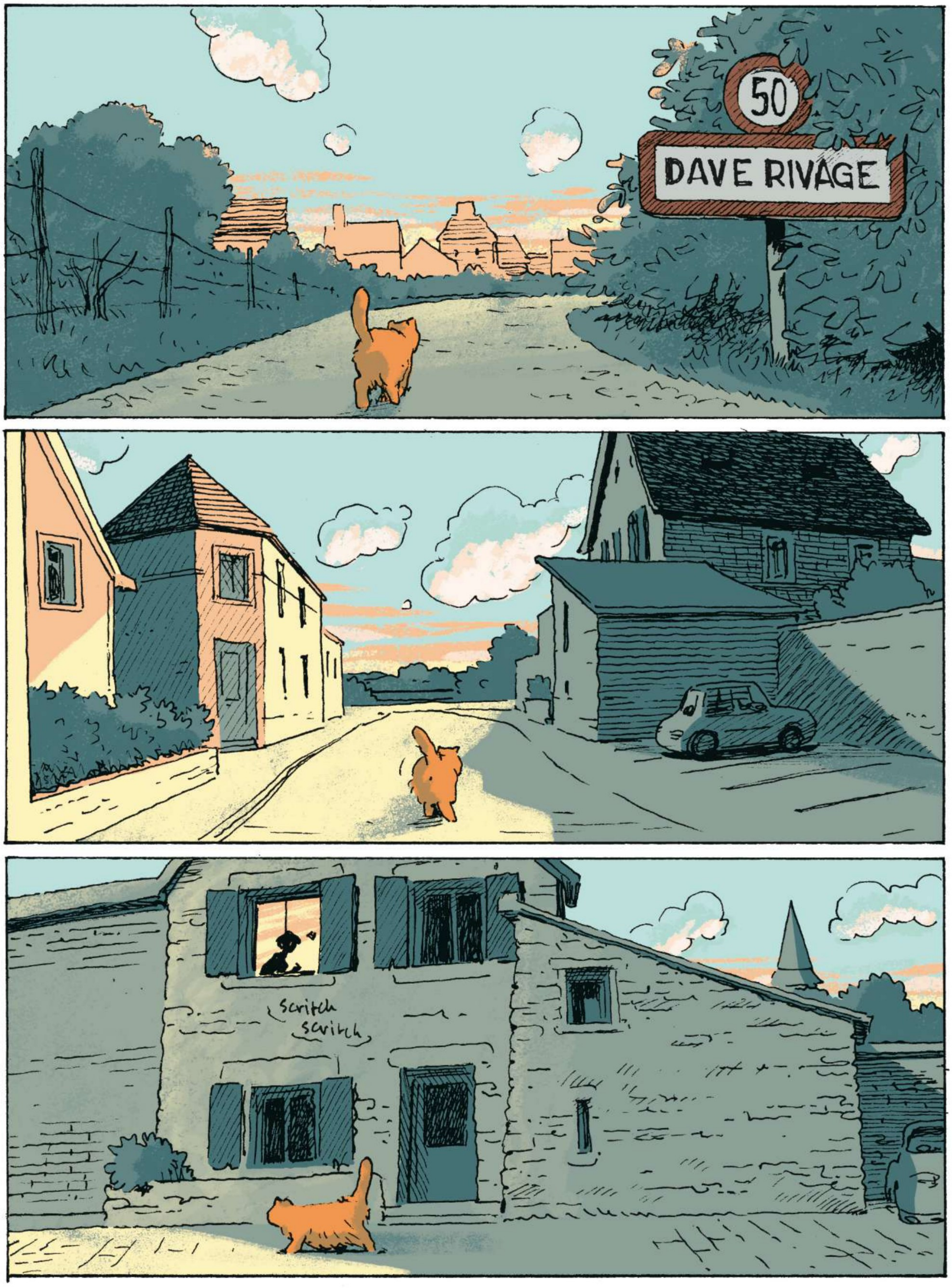
EUROPE COMICS



the world begins
at the edge of my lily pad




50
DAVE RIVAGE
scritch
scritch

H. Banchau:
"Each morning we wake up already desiring the night, and we fall asleep each night hoping not to wake".

OH HELLO, CAT.

SHHH!

YOU CAN STICK AROUND, DAD, BUT ONLY IF YOU KEEP QUIET. ANIMALS HEAR EVERYTHING.

BUT, I--

SHUSH. SERIOUSLY.

THIS IS WILD NATURE.

ARE YOU READY, JILL? I'M HERE!

ALMOST, MARION. COME IN!

"

SHIT! I CAN'T FIND MY SPORTS BRA!

HERE, YOU CAN USE MINE.

I DON'T REALLY NEED IT.

UH... THANKS.

NGHUUH!

2wip

IT'S TIGHT.

I'LL HELP YOU ADJUST IT.

CHEEP

I GOT WORK TO DO, SON. I'LL SEE YOU AT HOME.
SIGH
scritch scritch
"A wound is a better listener than an ear."
"Strange how we pass through life seeing almost nothing."
...

DON'T GET A CRICK IN YOUR NECK.

?!

HAHA!

UM.

RIGHT.

OK, I'VE PUT IT OFF FOR THREE DAYS NOW...

THIS TIME I--

SHUT UP, YOU DAMN BIRD! THIS AIN'T AN EASY PHONE CALL TO MAKE. I NEED QUIET.

iik

PING

?

Nicole

Like your present?

GRMBL!

Dial a number

OK! ZERO... ONE, EIGHT...

PING

?

ge from: Nicole

?

um n.

U8!

1 2 3

GODAMMIT! UNBELIEVABLE!

I GOT A CALL TO MAKE! GIMME A DAMN BREAK!

!!!!k

PLAM

STILL NO ANSWER! THAT MEAT HEAD...

TAk TAk TAk BRR

MAYBE GETTING HIM A PARROT WASN'T SUCH A GOOD IDEA AFTER ALL.

IT'S A GOOD THING I'M USED TO NO ONE ANSWERING MY CALLS, SO I'M ALREADY ON MY WAY TO SEE HIM.

POC

I SHOULD STOP TALKING TO MYSELF, THOUGH. I SOUND LIKE SOME SENILE OLD BIDDY.

TAK PT PT TAK TAK PT

PING

WHOA, A MESSAGE.

OH JOY!

FROM MY DAUGHTER, TOO!

New voicemail:

Darling Daughter

NOW THAT'S A REAL MIRACLE...

DID YOU NOT LIKE IT?
NO.
I MEAN, YEAH.
...I DON'T KNOW.
JILL! WILL YOU AND MARION BE BACK IN TIME FOR DINNER?
JILL?

THIS IS DR. MATHIEU'S OFFICE. HOW CAN I HELP YOU?

I...

UH...

...

HELLO?

GOD DAMN!

SHIT!

BIP

SNIFF

SNIFF

DAMN IT.

I JUST CAN'T.

SNIFF

BANG!!!

SLAM

BOOP

NEW VOICEMAIL

PFF

...

SIMON, IT'S PRINCIPAL LEBLANC. I SEE YOU STILL HAVEN'T LOGGED FINAL GRADES FOR THE SEMESTER... AS USUAL, I'M TEMPTED TO SAY. IT MIGHT BE TIME TO ASK YOURSELF IF YOU REALLY CARE ABOUT TEACHING, BECAUSE I'M STARTING TO WONDER. THINGS CAN'T GO ON LIKE THIS, YOU KNOW.

NO.

THEY CAN'T.

Rodin

...AND YET THEY MUST.

I CAN'T DO THIS.

JUST LOOKING AT THESE ESSAYS MAKES ME WANT TO VOMIT.

BAM

BIG BIG SIGH

GETTING TOO DARK TO SEE ANYTHING...

?!

...

CLIC

VRRR
TAC
TAK
PAK
PET
tip tip

scritch scritch

This is my personal diary and all I write in it are quotes. Not a single original thought.

Why?

WHY?

Lap
Lap

I'M
HERE.

FLP

GO ON.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY YOU'RE SO INTERESTED IN HUMANS. THEIR WAY OF LIFE IS KILLING US.

I'M NOT INTERESTED IN HUMANS. AS A SPECIES, THEY DISGUST ME.

IT'S THE SPECIMENS LIVING ON OUR SHORE THAT I WANT TO KNOW ABOUT. THEIR LIVES AS INDIVIDUALS.

BUT WHY?

THEY'RE OUR NEIGHBORS. IT'S IMPORTANT WE UNDERSTAND THEM.

BUT WHY THESE ONES?

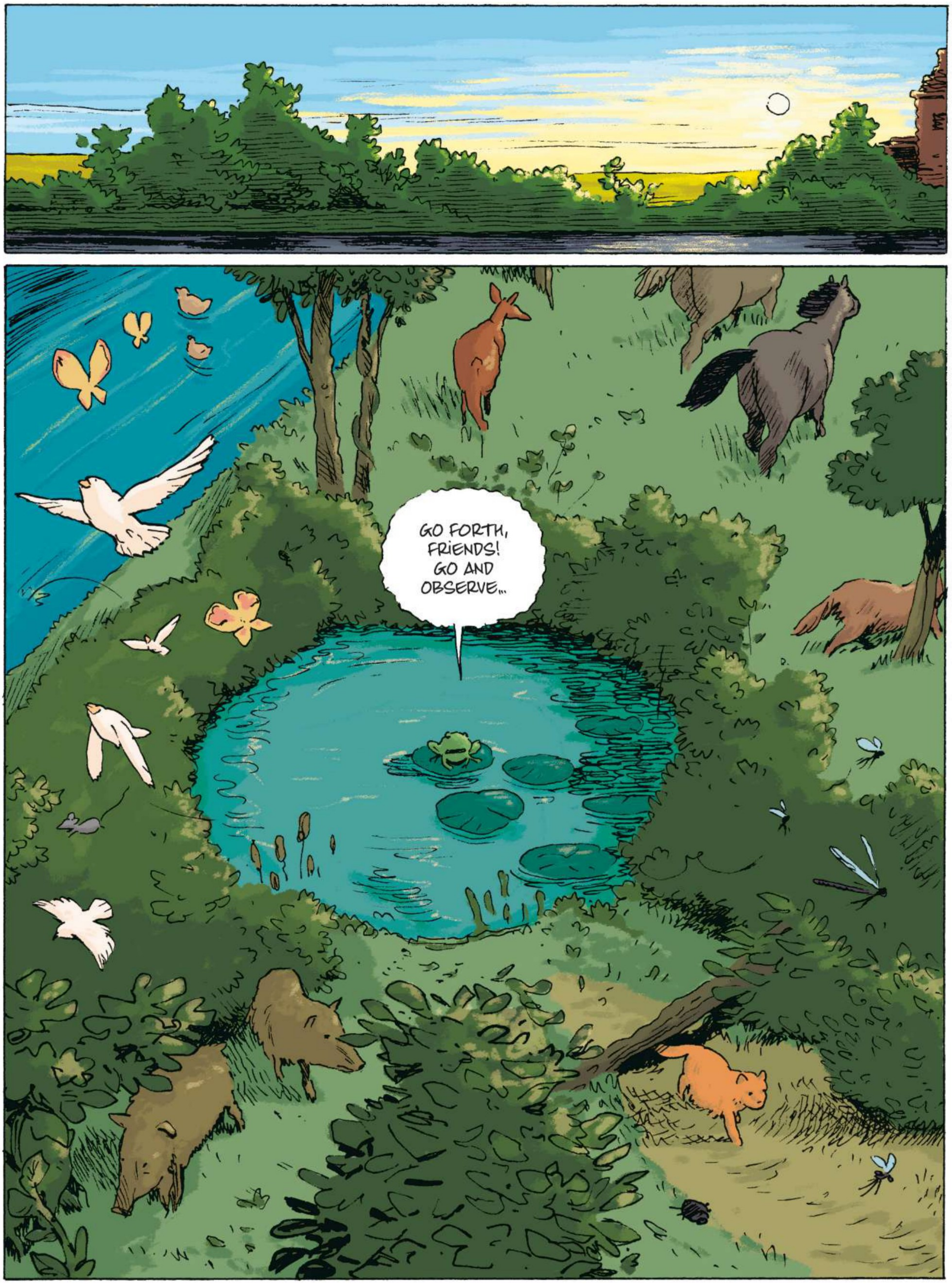
WHY NOT THEM? THE WORLD BEGINS AT THE EDGE OF MY LILY PAD... THESE HUMANS ARE AS GOOD AS ANY.

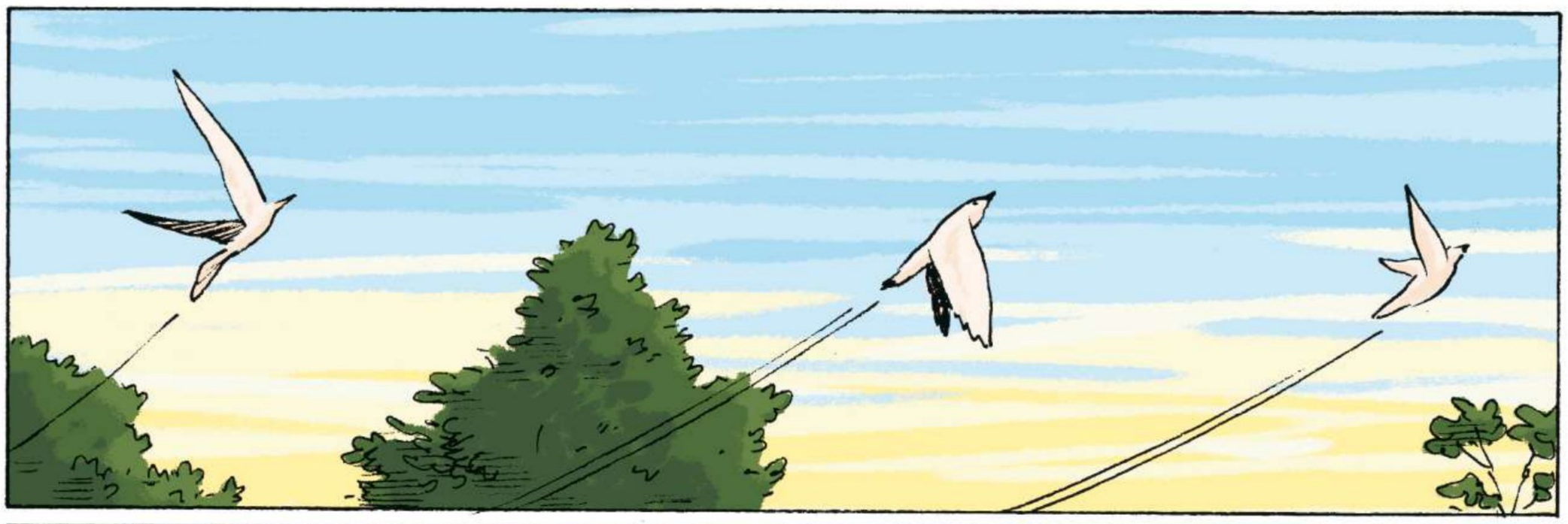
I KNOW YOU DON'T LIKE IT, BUT PLEASE KEEP OBSERVING THEM FOR ME.

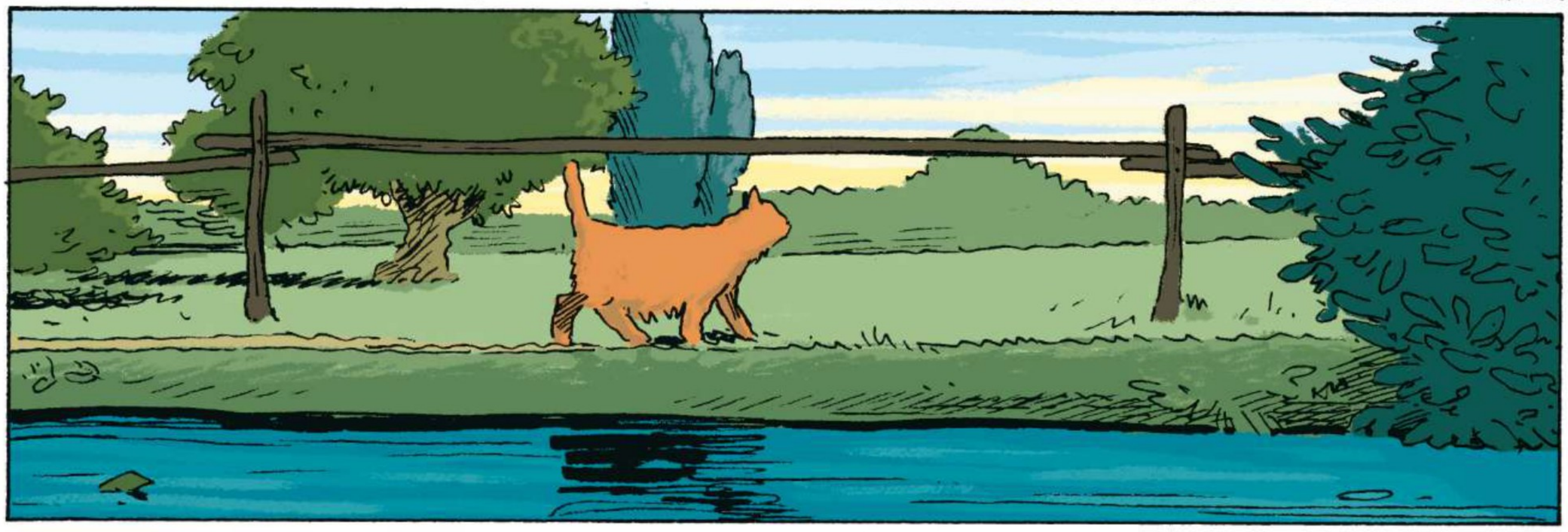
THEY ENJOY WATCHING US. IT SHOULD BE OUR TURN TO SEE THEM STRUGGLE THROUGH THEIR LITTLE LIVES, DON'T YOU THINK?

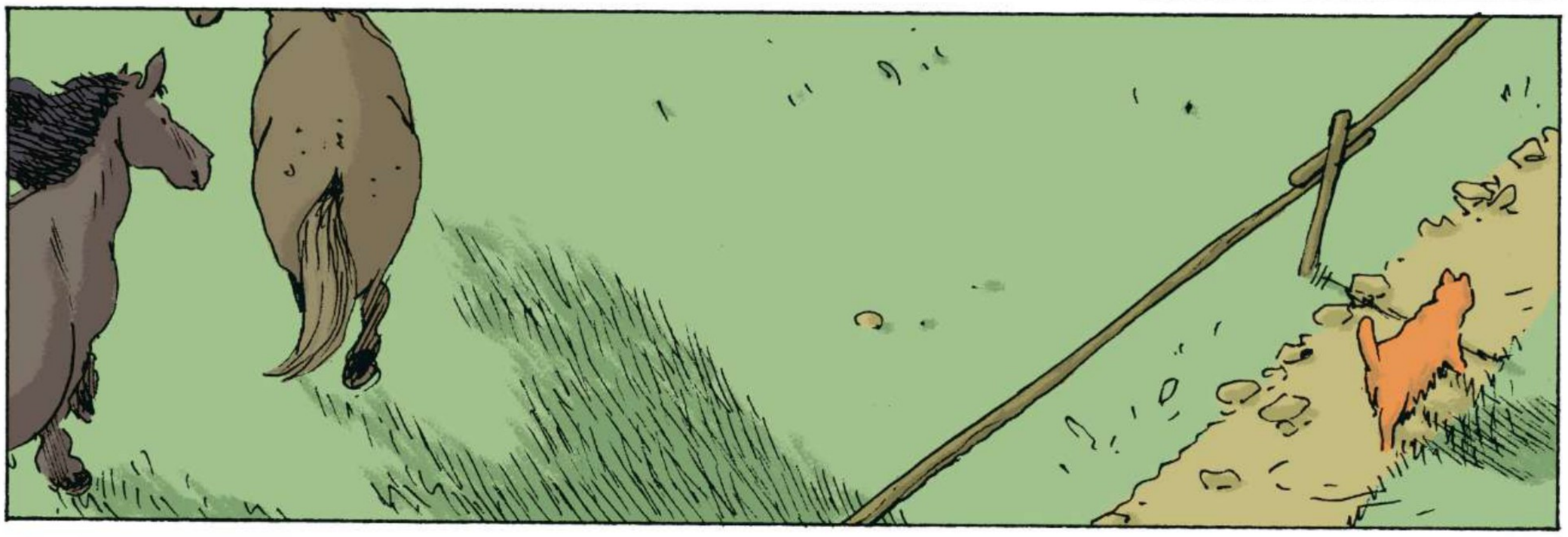
NOW, TELL ME EVERYTHING YOU SAW TONIGHT...

there is no truth,
only stories


GO FORTH, FRIENDS! GO AND OBSERVE...







A NEW DAY BEGINS.
ONE SURE TO BRING
NEW SURPRISES...

Jón Kalman Stefánsson:

"It is essential that people recognize the importance of small things."

"Seize life whenever it arises and without formality, pluck its fruit with no thought of the consequences."

SHIT.

SHIT, SHIT, SHIT.

OK.

"I think it's true when people say that beauty can make us unhappy, because life almost never comes out larger in comparison."

LET'S GO!

C'MON!

GULP

...

QUIIICK!

"All signs point to there being an infinite number of universes and so it is impossible for the human mind to comprehend the fundamental laws governing our existence."

HSS

SHIT
SHIT
SHIT!

H.
H.

PSSHH...
WHAT AM I SO AFRAID OF?

AS IF PEOPLE WERE WATCHING ME...
BUT NO ONE LOOKS AT ME ANYMORE.

RAAAAH!

ENOUGH... STOP OVERTHINKING IT!

?!

HA HA HA HA HA!

HA HA HA HA HA

EEE!

POK

SPLASH

POC

FLOUFF

HUH

...

PFFT!

SHIT...

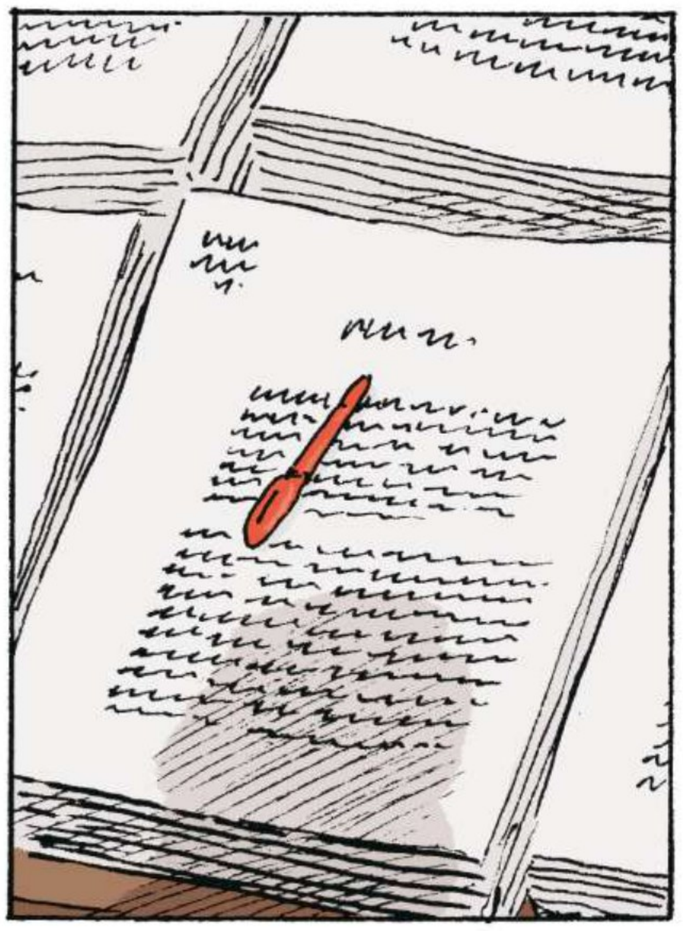
THAT WAS REALLY WILD.

NNGAH...

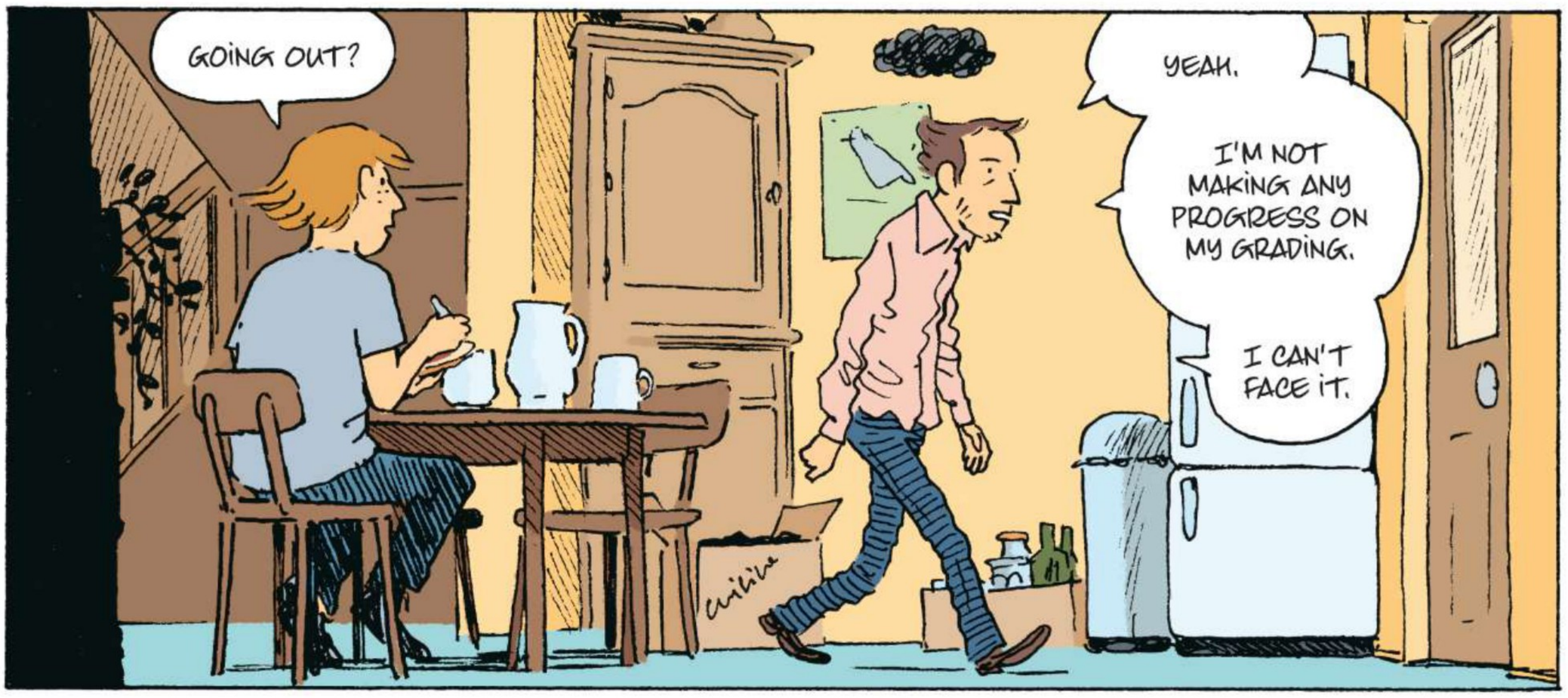
I CAN'T...

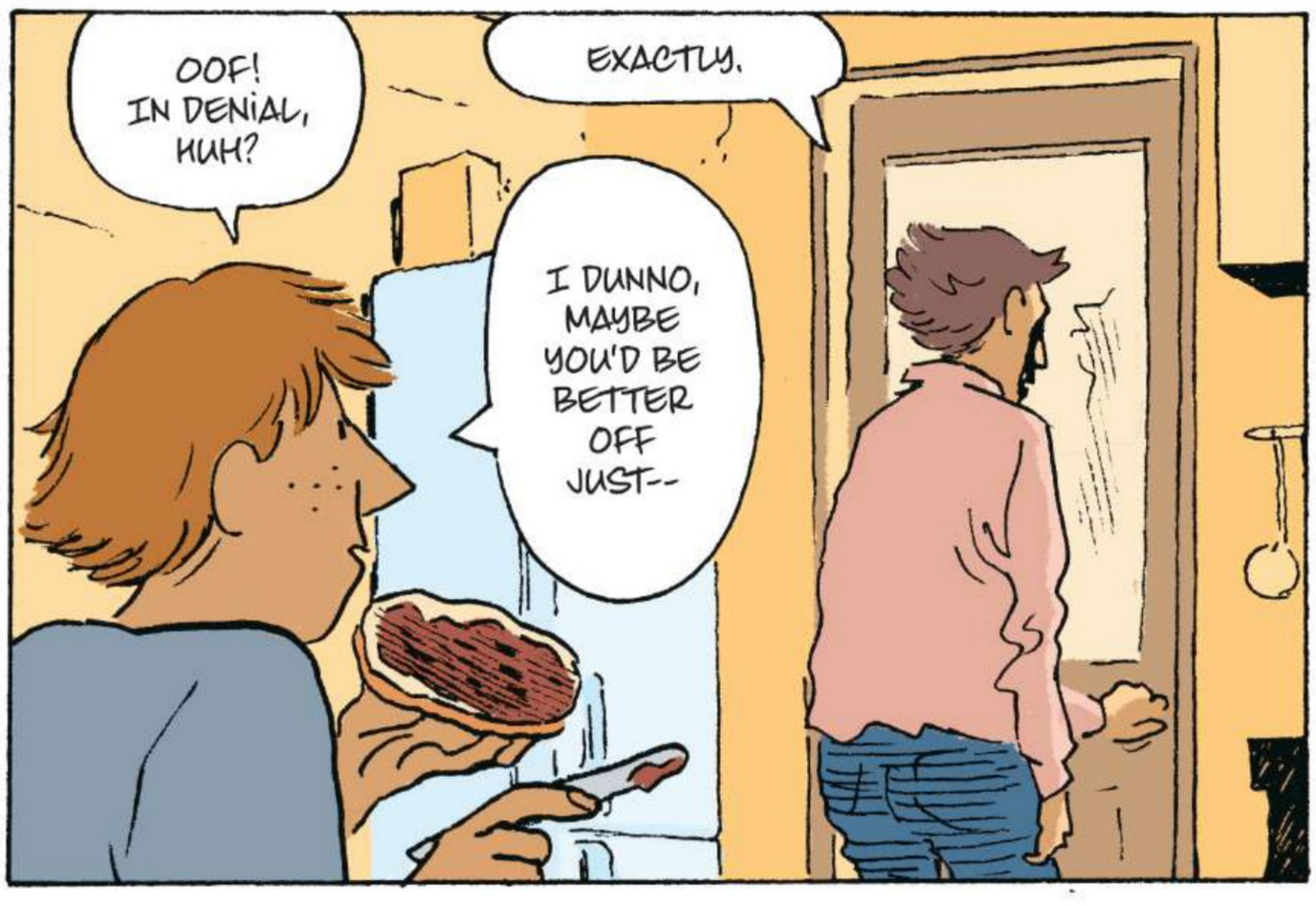
RRRAH...

HEY, NEED A HAND?



SIGH


GOING OUT?
YEAH.
I'M NOT MAKING ANY PROGRESS ON MY GRADING.
I CAN'T FACE IT.


OOF! IN DENIAL, HUH?
EXACTLY.
I DUNNO, MAYBE YOU'D BE BETTER OFF JUST--

SHH, HUGO!
WE TEACHERS HATE BEING TAUGHT A LESSON.

...ESPECIALLY WHEN IT'S A GOOD ONE.

BECAUSE A TEACHER IS USED TO HAVING ALL THE ANSWERS.

EVEN WHEN HE'S WRONG.

AAAAAAAAAA!

HEH HEH!

NOW THAT'D BE FUN... SOME REAL RAGE!

PFFFT

?

PFFT...
DAMN, THAT WAS REALLY WILD.
NNGAH... I CAN'T... RRRAH...
HEY, NEED A HAND?
?!
?
THE WOMAN AT THE WINDOW!
EVEN PRETTIER THAN AS A SILHOUETTE.

HEY...

IS THAT DIANE?

NAH, NAH...

YES!

THEN AGAIN, MAYBE NOT.

ARRRGH...! I CAN'T BE SURE.

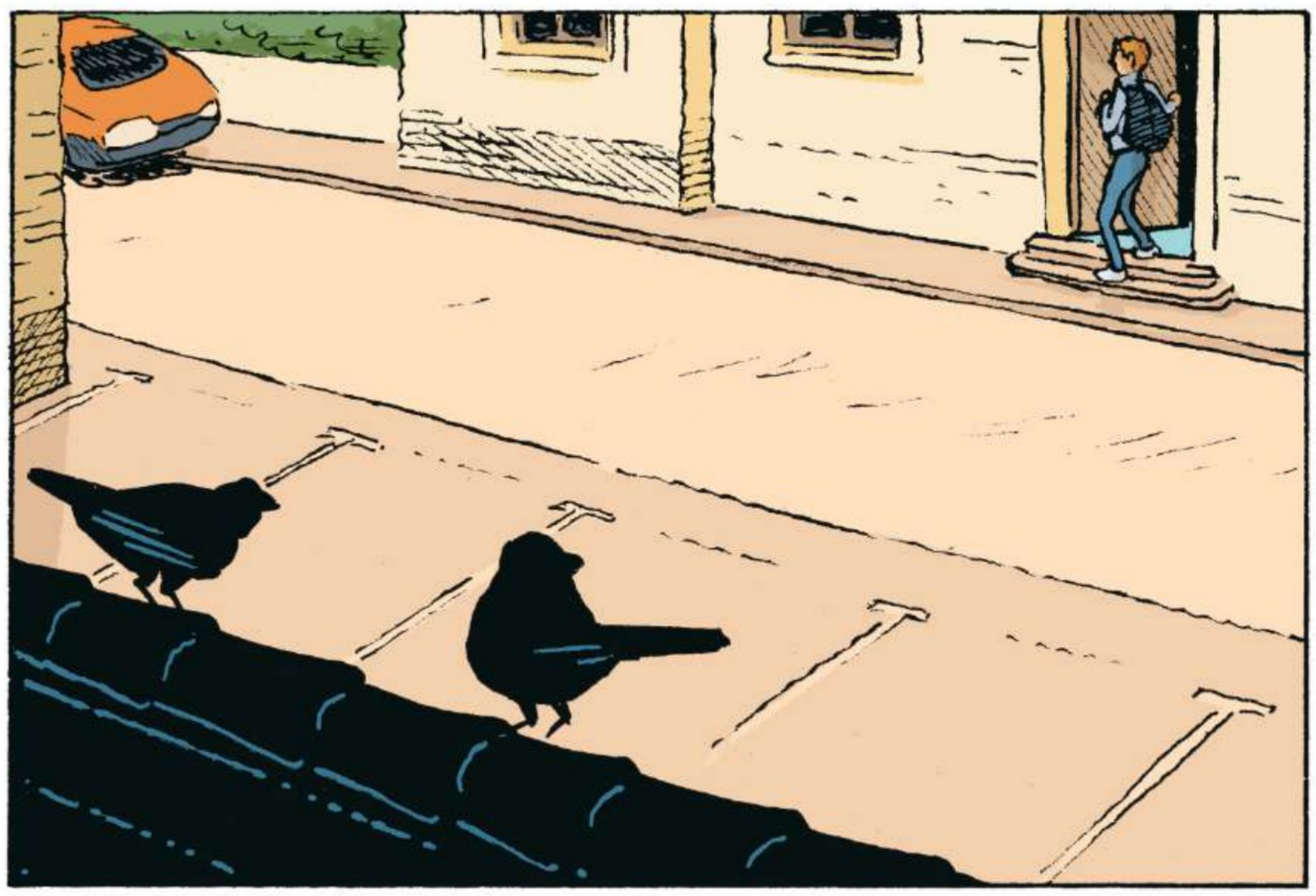
OK.

YES, IT IS HER.

SHIT.

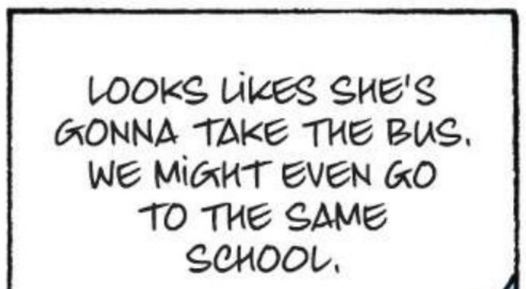
Diane STINGHAMBER

I MEAN... GREAT!



...

WHOA!
THE GIRL FROM LAST NIGHT.


LOOKS LIKES SHE'S GONNA TAKE THE BUS. WE MIGHT EVEN GO TO THE SAME SCHOOL.

CRAP!!

THINK OF SOMETHING INTERESTING TO SAY.

UHH...

HRM! OK, MAYBE INTERESTING IS AIMING TOO HIGH. JUST MEETING HER IS ENOUGH FOR NOW.

"HELLO."

YEAH, THAT'S GOOD: "HELLO."

UH...

NO!

"HELLO" IS LAME.

"HEY." THAT'S BETTER, RIGHT?

HEY!

?!

UM.

YES, UH, HELL--

HEY.

SO...

I NEED TO CATCH THE BUS TO SAINT MARY'S. ARE YOU FAMILIAR WITH IT?

YES.

THE BUS?

YEAH, AND THE SCHOOL.

...

*RAK TAK VRRM

BOM BOM

WHERE'S THAT OLD GRUMP GOT TO?

HELLO?!

I'M AT YOUR WINDOW.

YAAAWWN

KRRii

HERE. SOMETHING TO EAT THAT DIDN'T COME OUT OF A FREEZER.

BIO

PLAF

I HOPE YOU'VE BEEN TAKING GOOD CARE OF MY PRESENT.

iik!

THE HELL AM I S'POSED TO DO WITH IT?

I WAS HOPING IT'D MAKE YOU FEEL LESS LONELY.

"LESS LONELY."

PFF!

cloc

toc

poc

MOST PEOPLE DO THAT AT A SINK.

UH-HUH.

FRT FRT

IT'S NOT A CRITICISM. JUST AN OBSERVATION.

TH'ASH GOOD, NICWOLE, YOU'WE...

...IMPWOOVING.

FRT FRT

YOU CAME BY LAST NIGHT, DIDN'T YOU? I HEARD YOUR CAR.

I LEFT AGAIN RIGHT AWAY.

PTU

REALLY? WHY?

YOUR GIRL?

SHE FINALLY CALLED YOU?

I HAVE TO GO, PIERRE. IT'S MY SHIFT AT THE REFUGEE WELCOME CENTER, AND I'M ALREADY LATE.

FRT FRT

NICOLE!

YOUR LITTLE AVOIDANCE STRATEGIES DON'T WORK ON ME. WE'VE KNOWN EACH OTHER TOO LONG. WHAT DID YOUR DAUGHTER TELL YOU?

THAT SHE DOESN'T WANT TO SEE ME.

AH.

SHIT.

MFF

PFF

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

I DON'T KNOW. THERE'S NOT MUCH I CAN DO, SINCE SHE WON'T TALK TO ME.

MAYBE YOU COULD--

FIGURE OUT YOUR OWN LIFE BEFORE YOU TRY TO FIX MINE, PIERRE. YOU'VE LIVED HERE FOR TWO YEARS AND HAVEN'T SPOKEN TO A SINGLE PERSON.

PING

THERE! SEE, NICOLE? NO NEED TO WORRY OVER ME. I'M SUPER POPULAR!

HELLO?

GOOD MORNING, SIR, THIS IS DR. MATHIEU. I SEE THAT YOU CALLED MY OFFICE YESTERDAY, BUT THE CONNECTION CUT OUT.

...

HAVING TROUBLE? I CAN DO A HOUSE CALL THIS AFTERNOON.

NO, NO, I'M FINE, I'LL CALL YOU BACK LATER.

WHO WAS THAT?

NO ONE.

OBVIOUSLY.

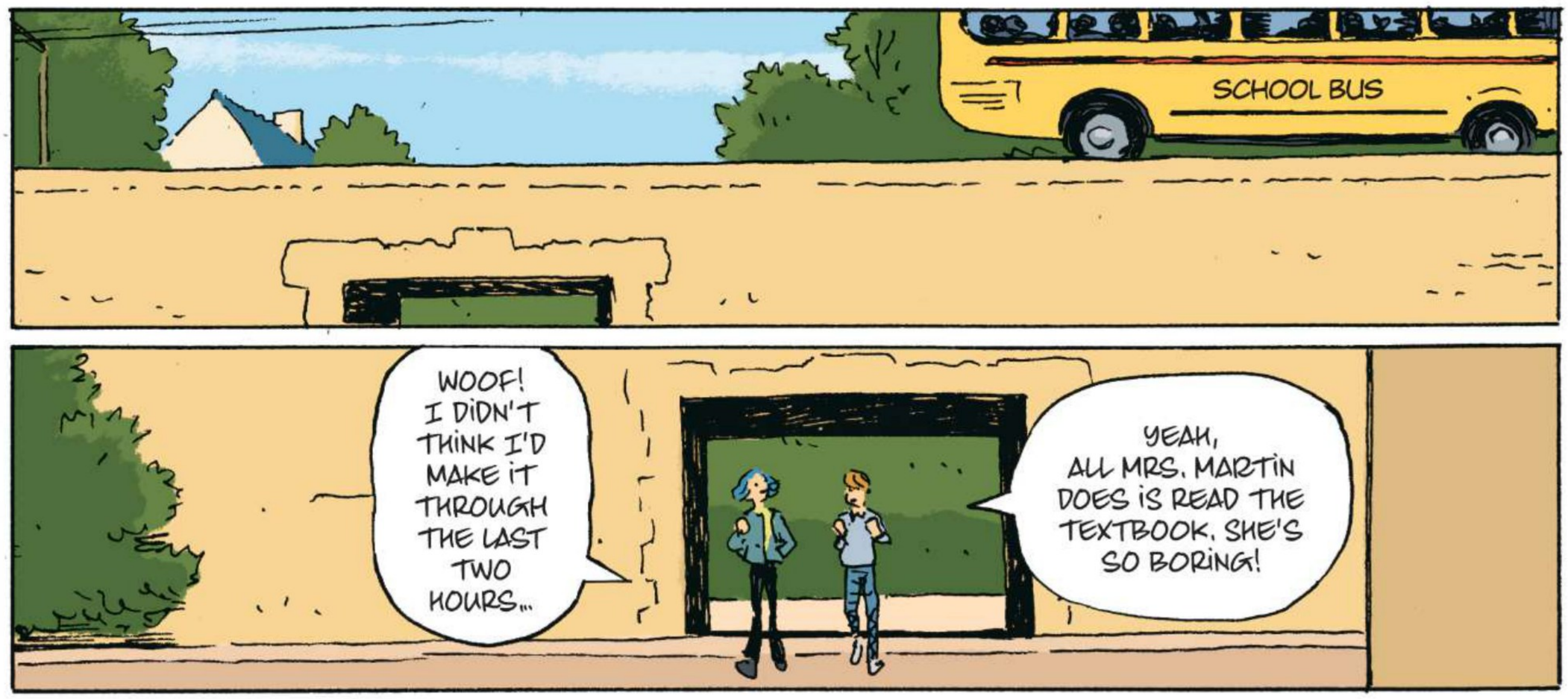
BYE.

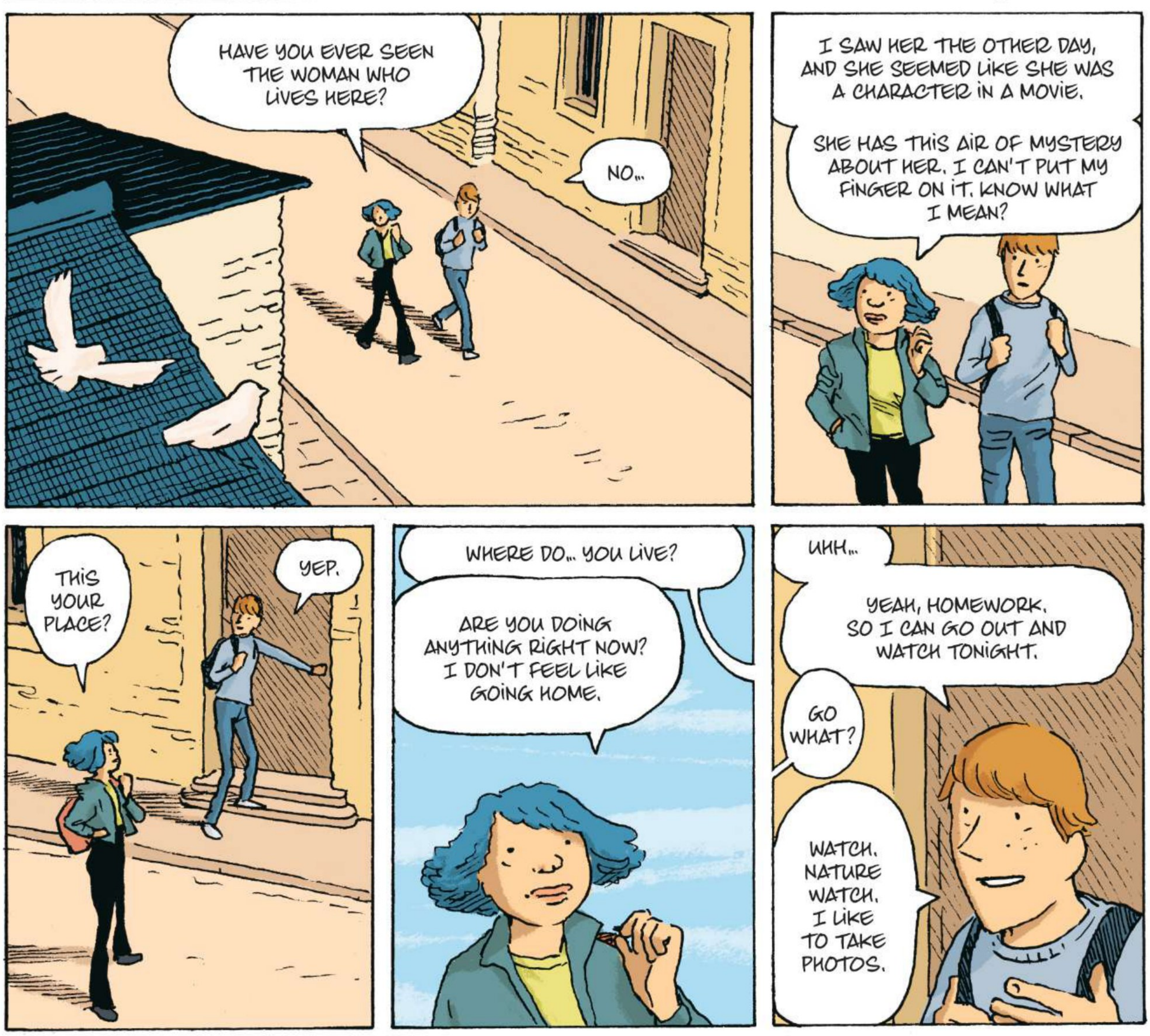
BRR

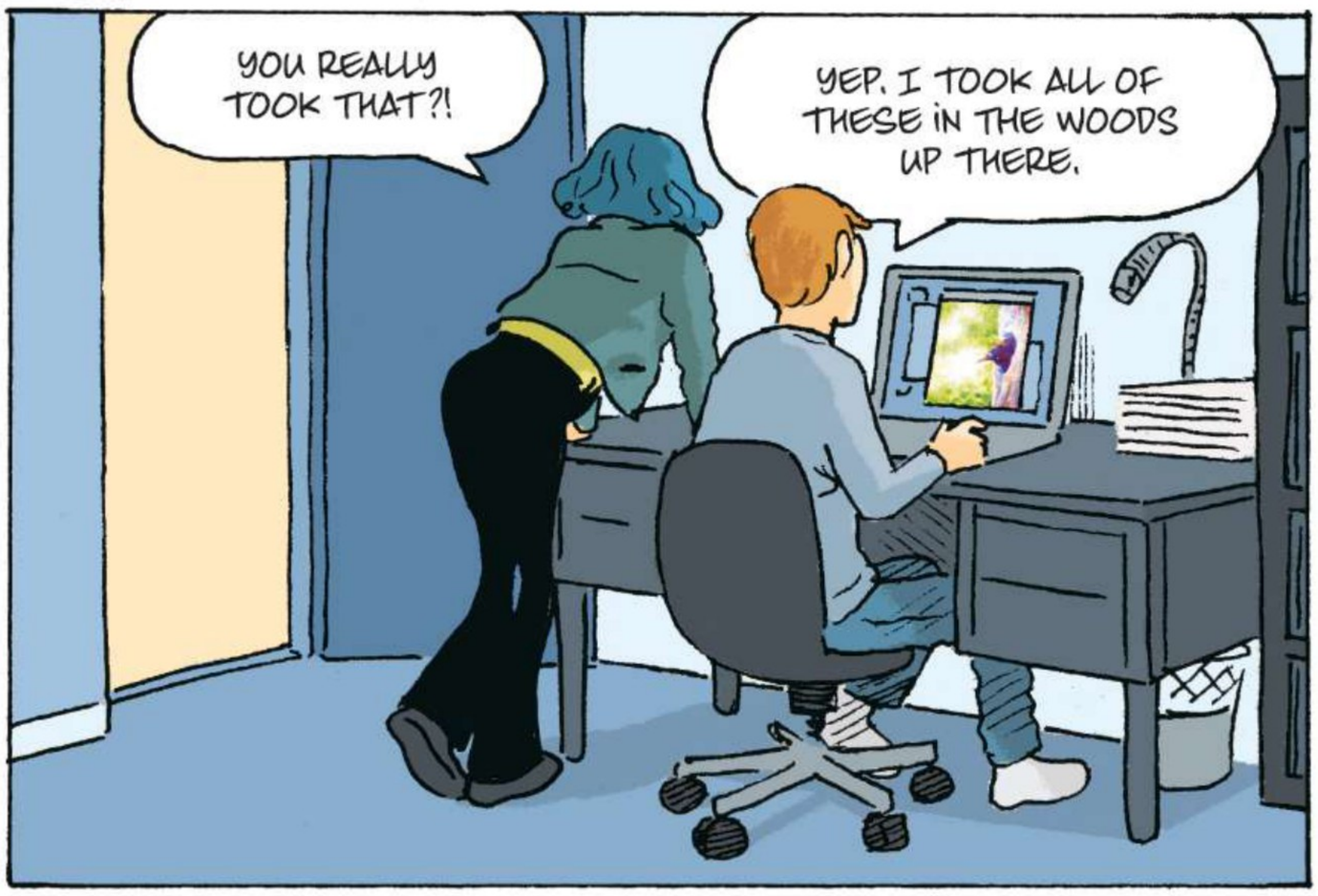
GAH! STUPID CAR!!

RAK

TAK


SCHOOL BUS

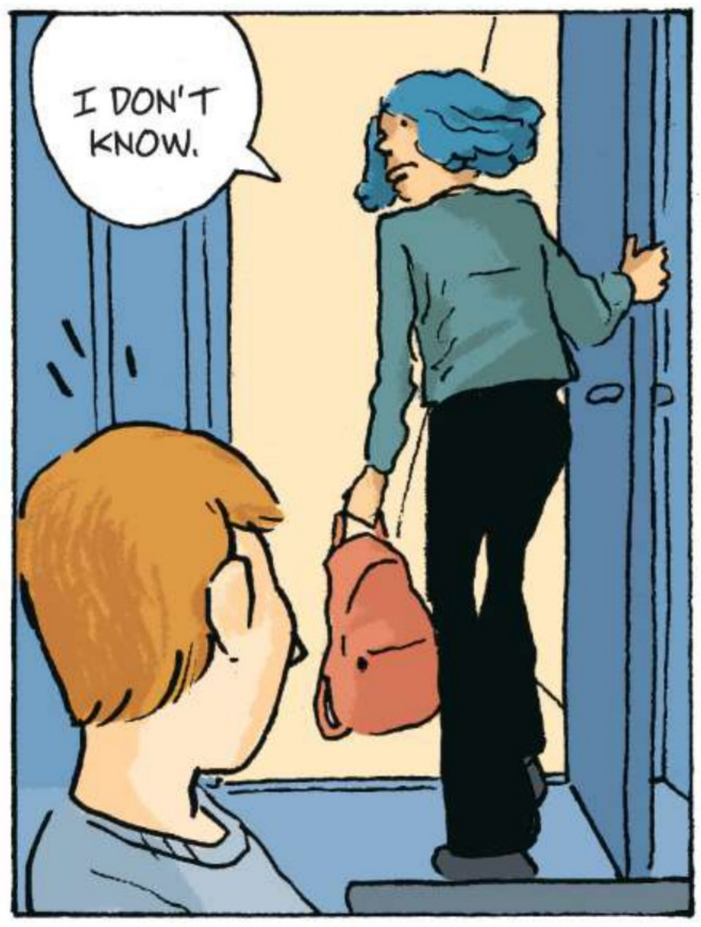

WOOF! I DIDN'T THINK I'D MAKE IT THROUGH THE LAST TWO HOURS...
YEAH, ALL MRS. MARTIN DOES IS READ THE TEXTBOOK. SHE'S SO BORING!
HAVE YOU EVER SEEN THE WOMAN WHO LIVES HERE?
NO...
I SAW HER THE OTHER DAY, AND SHE SEEMED LIKE SHE WAS A CHARACTER IN A MOVIE.
SHE HAS THIS AIR OF MYSTERY ABOUT HER. I CAN'T PUT MY FINGER ON IT. KNOW WHAT I MEAN?
THIS YOUR PLACE?
YEP.
WHERE DO... YOU LIVE?
ARE YOU DOING ANYTHING RIGHT NOW? I DON'T FEEL LIKE GOING HOME.
UHH...
YEAH, HOMEWORK. SO I CAN GO OUT AND WATCH TONIGHT.
GO WHAT?
WATCH. NATURE WATCH. I LIKE TO TAKE PHOTOS.


YOU REALLY TOOK THAT?!
YEP. I TOOK ALL OF THESE IN THE WOODS UP THERE.

I'M GOING AGAIN TONIGHT. IT'S A GREAT TIME OF YEAR... ALL THE BABIES ARE COMING OUT!
YOU CAN COME WITH IF YOU WANT.

...
I...

...
JILL?


I DON'T KNOW.

UH...
OK.
BYE!

?
STRANGE CREATURE.

DO I WANT TO GO OR NOT?

REALLY WANT TO?

...

IF I GO, WHAT WILL HE THINK? THAT I LIKE HIM! BUT DO I LIKE HIM? ...HE'S REALLY INTO ME, THAT MUCH I KNOW FOR SURE.

BUT ME?

WHY ARE YOU STARING AT ME LIKE THAT, MOUSY?

MAYBE YOU LIKE ME TOO, HUH?

WHY DOES EVERYONE HAVE TO LIKE ME ALL OF A SUDDEN? IT'S A PAIN!

AND NEVER BEING SURE ABOUT ANYTHING, NOW THAT'S AN EVEN BIGGER PAIN!

Snif Snif

?!

EEE!

RELAX...

THE TOAD WOULD GET UPSET IF ANYTHING HAPPENED TO YOU BEFORE YOU CAN TELL HIM WHAT YOU'VE SEEN. SO TAKE IT EASY.

IT WAS WRONG.

NO, NO, DON'T WORRY.

I SAVED HER, AND WE'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO INTERFERE...

THAT'S LIFE. THE RULES ARE MADE TO BE BROKEN FROM TIME TO TIME.

IT'S STRANGE.

WHEN I SAW HER IN THE WATER, IT WASN'T JUST SOME DROWNING HUMAN BUT THE WOMAN WHOSE STORY WE'D ONLY JUST BEGUN TO FOLLOW. THAT'S WHY I COULDN'T LET HER GO UNDER.

DAMN IT!!

WE'RE ONLY SUPPOSED TO OBSERVE!

TRUE, BUT OUR FRIEND THE CATFISH DECIDED TO SAVE THAT WOMAN.

WHY?! HUMANS NEVER HESITATE TO KILL US!

CALM DOWN, CAT.

SOONER OR LATER, ALL OF US--HUMANS INCLUDED--WILL BE NOTHING BUT SCATTERED ATOMS, WITHOUT IDENTITY, MEMORY, OR SCENT, DRIFTING THROUGH THE UNIVERSE AT RANDOM... SO WHY GET UPSET?

WATCH THEM AND--

HSS!

THE TRUTH IS THEY'RE NOTHING BUT IGNOBLE BRUTES.

THERE IS NO TRUTH, ONLY STORIES. ALL OF THEM TOLD FROM DIFFERENT POINTS OF VIEW.

ANIMALS AND HUMANS MUST LEARN TO SPEAK EACH OTHER'S LANGUAGE, SO WE CAN COMPARE THE STORIES WE TELL ABOUT EACH OTHER AND THE WORLD WE SHARE.

ME, I BELIEVE IN ATOMS. WE'RE ALL MADE FROM THE SAME MATERIAL. OUR FATES ARE INTERTWINED.

THEY MAY HAVE FORGOTTEN THAT, BUT PERHAPS ONE DAY THEY'LL REMEMBER.

I NEED TO HEAR WHO THEY ARE.

EEEAK!

CHOMP CHOMP

THERE'S ONE STORY YOU'LL NEVER HEAR.

HOW SPITEFUL HE IS...

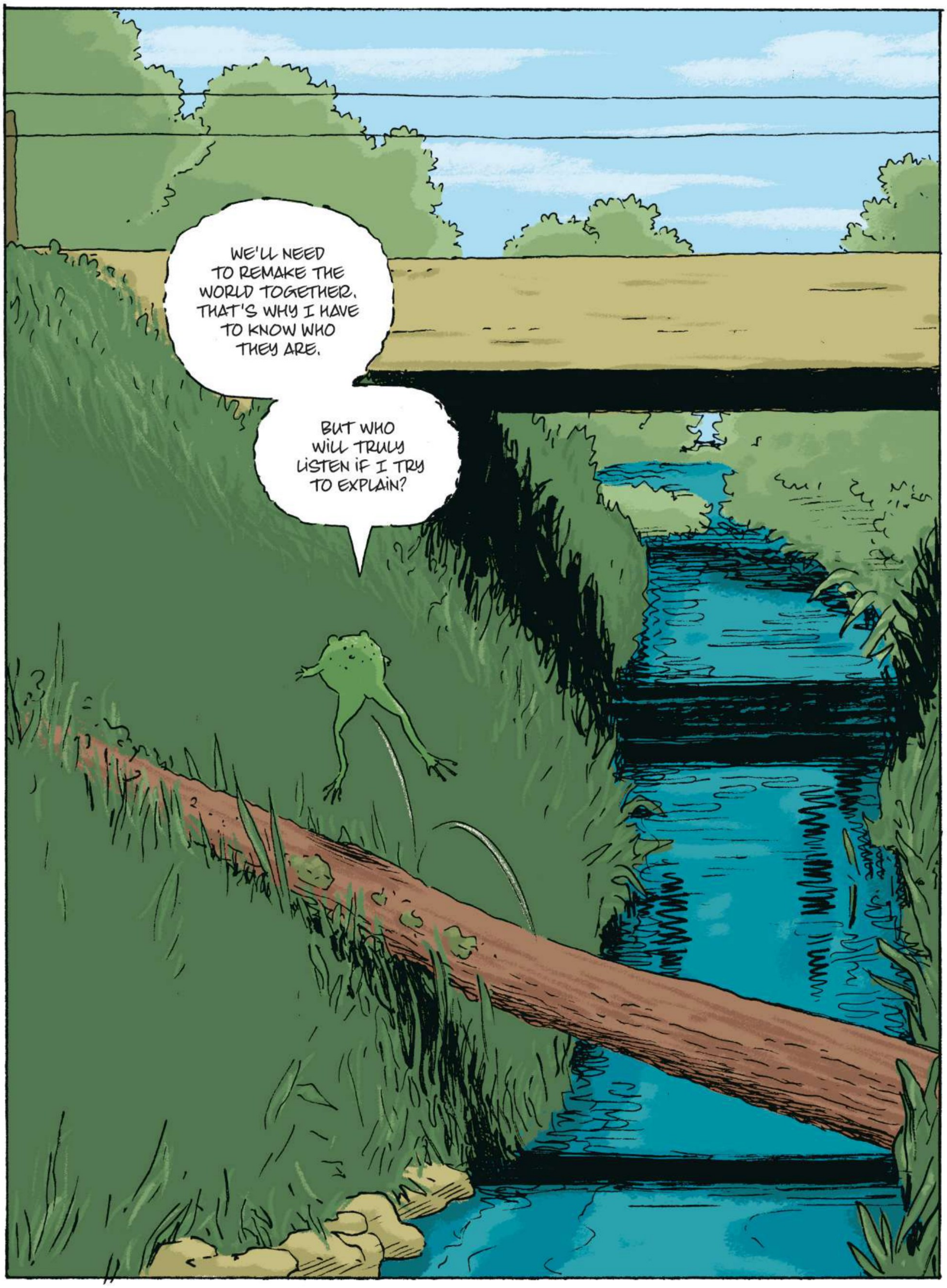
MAYBE HE'S RIGHT, AND WE'RE LOSING OUR WILD NATURE BY GETTING CLOSE TO THEM.

THE STATE OF THE WORLD IS SO DARK ALREADY...

WHAT HAVE WE TO FEAR?

I TRUST YOU, TOAD. YOU'RE WISER THAN I...

HMMM...


WE'LL NEED TO REMAKE THE WORLD TOGETHER. THAT'S WHY I HAVE TO KNOW WHO THEY ARE.
BUT WHO WILL TRULY LISTEN IF I TRY TO EXPLAIN?

can you bite a corpse?

BAM
OW!

ALL RIGHT, OLD GIRL, YOU KNOW SWIMMING IS GOOD FOR YOU. THERE'S NO REASON TO FREAK OUT LIKE YOU DID YESTERDAY...

CLAC

NO MORE HESITATING. JUST DO IT.

MMMMM

AH

SHIT...

?

NGH!

OOOH!

HEY, GIRLS!

COME ON, THIS'LL BE FUN!

OOOOOOOOOOOOOOOH!!!

AWESOME!

FLOP

OK, SHE WAS HERE YESTERDAY... WITH ANY LUCK, SHE'LL BE BACK TODAY!

BE NATURAL AND RELAXED, SIMON. IF SHE COMES, ACT SURPRISED. "OH, FANCY MEETING YOU HERE, AFTER ALL THIS TIME."

THEN STRIKE UP A CONVERSATION.

SELF-CONFIDENCE, THAT'S WHAT MATTERS. YOU'RE FORTY, YOU'VE MATURED. YOU OWN THIS!

I'VE MATURED AND I OWN THIS.

I'M NATURAL AND RELAXED.

HMM...

MAYBE JUST A LITTLE TOO MATURE.

GRRAH!

THERE.

NATURAL... AND...

RELAXED!

YOW!

?

SHIT!

WHAT THE HELL IS...?

OW!

IT'S MY FISHHOOK, I...

GRR!

SORRY...

GUESS I CAUGHT A MERMAID.

HE HE!

UMM...

I'M REALLY SORRY...

DIANE.

SIMON?!

WHAT'S WRONG WITH HIM?
WHY ISN'T HE MOVING?
HE FELL!
LOOKS SERIOUS, EH?
YEEAH, SWEET!
THINK HE'S DEAD?
DON'T KNOW.
DOES HE HAVE A PULSE?
SO, CAN YOU BITE A CORPSE?
HEY.
...
?
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT... WHAT'S HE DOING HERE??
"I CAUGHT A MERMAID."
YOU BIG CREEP.
AAAAH
?

?!

SHH!

I SCREWED IT UP EVEN WORSE THAN TWENTY YEARS AGO!

Rrrrrrr

WHAT??

NOT HAPPY?

NOT BEING USED TO YOUR FULL POTENTIAL, HUH?

DON'T LOOK AT ME LIKE THAT, YOU GREAT AUTHORS. I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE THINKING:

"NOW HE'S TALKING TO A BALLPOINT PEN."

"THAT'S NO WAY TO ATTRACT A CLASSY WOMAN."

JUST BECAUSE YOU'RE IN ALL THE TEXTBOOKS DOESN'T MEAN YOU HAVE TO WEIGH IN ON EVERYTHING!!!

BRRR

TAK

BAQ

BÔM

PUT

PUT

PUT

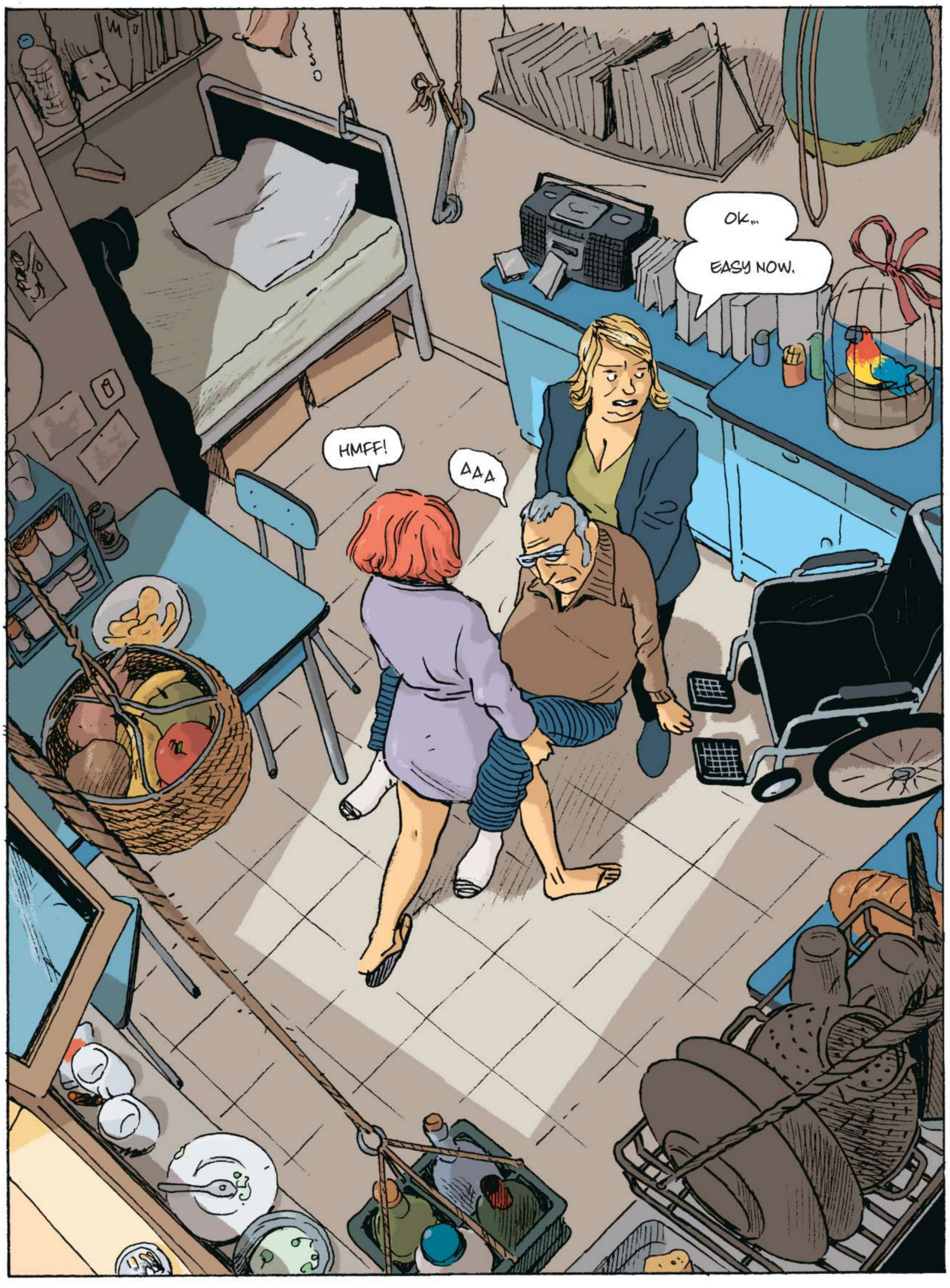
QUIIICK!

I SAW HIM ON THE FLOOR THROUGH THE WINDOW. YOUR NUMBER WAS THE FIRST CONTACT IN HIS PHONE.

HELP ME GET HIM UP.

HERE WE GO! GRAB HIS ARMS!

NUADH


OK...
EASY NOW.
HMFF!
AAA

YOU OK?

LOOKS LIKE HE'S WAKING UP.

SEEMS I CAN'T EVEN GET FROM MY BED TO MY CHAIR ANYMORE...

I TOLD YOU TO GET AN IN-HOME NURSE! IT'S NOT THAT HARD, YOU KNOW!

YOU'RE MY IN-HOME NURSE, NICOLE.

THAT'S NOT FUNNY, PIERRE.

I HOPE HE'LL BE OK...

HE'D HAVE LAIN THERE ALL DAY IF IT WEREN'T FOR YOU. HE HAS BEFORE.

IT'S GETTING HARDER AND HARDER FOR HIM.

I'M RIGHT HERE, YOU KNOW! DON'T TALK LIKE I'M ALREADY DEAD!

WHAT DO WE DO?

SHH! WAIT...

I HAVE TO GO GET CHANGED.

OF COURSE. THANKS AGAIN!

I'M LEAVING, TOO. I'M ON DUTY AT THE REFUGEE CENTER.

HE'LL BE ALL ALONE?

HE PUTS UP WITH ME BECAUSE HE HAS NO CHOICE. HE'D RATHER BE ALONE.

IS HE YOUR BROTHER?

MY EX LOVER.

HE HAS A DEGENERATIVE CONDITION AND NO FAMILY TO SPEAK OF. EVERY DAY WHEN HE WAKES UP, HE WONDERS HOW MUCH WORSE HE'LL BE THAN THE DAY BEFORE.

HOW OLD ARE YOU?

?

FORTY-ONE. WHY?

SAME AS MY DAUGHTER.

THINK YOU COULD CHECK IN ON HIM FROM TIME TO TIME?

YEAH, SURE.

COULD YOU HAND ME MY GUITAR?

Sylvain Tesson:
"The only lesson the dead teach us is to get busy living..."

...To live more, to live greedily. To strive for a surplus of life...

...To sweep it all up. To bless each moment.

...And offer that surplus of life to them, those lost floating in the void, while the evening sun pierces the leaves."

WHO IS THIS GUY?

FIRST, HE FALLS, CAN'T EVEN GET BACK UP. NOW HE'S ALL SLOUCHED OVER IN THAT WHEELIE THING...

HE'S DISABLED.

DISABLED?

HIS LEGS DON'T WORK, SO HE HAS TO ROLL.

WHAAAT? IF WE STOP WALKING, WE JUST DIE.

NOT HUMANS. NOT RIGHT AWAY, ANYWAYS.

OOOH, I LIKE IT! SO UNFAIR AND DEPRESSING. LOOK AT HIM IT'S LIKE HE'S STUCK IN A WEB. HAHAHA!

THINK HE'S IN PAIN?

DEFINITELY. WHEN HE'S BEEN DRINKING, I HEAR HIM COMPLAIN. HE LOOKS AT OLD PHOTOS, SINGS, AND CRIES.

THE OLD FART REALLY CRIES? HAHAHA!

I DON'T THINK HE EVEN LEAVES THE HOUSE. EVER.

OOOH! SUPER SAD, I LOVE IT.

SHUSH, HE MIGHT HEAR US!

KEEP COOL, GIRLS. WE WATCH BUT WE DON'T TOUCH, THAT'S THE RULE...

IN WINTER, THE MALE OWL HOOTS TO MARK HIS TERRITORY AND LET THE FEMALE KNOW HE'S THERE.

THEN IN SPRING...

THEY...

IN SPRING THEY WHAT?

WELL, YOU KNOW, THEY...

UH...

HE...

THE FEMALE IS FERTILIZED BY THE MALE, AND THEY REPRODUCE.

THEY GET IT ON, BASICALLY!

MM.

OH!

IT'S A BIT DARK...

HERE...

LET ME ZOOM IN SOME.

OH YEEEAH! WOW!

AMAZING HOW WELL YOU CAN SEE.

HM?

UH.

GOT A GIRLFRIEND, HUGO?

ME?

NO.

EVER HAD ONE?

I'VE KISSED A GIRL BEFORE, BUT JUST ONCE.

...WHAT ABOUT YOU?

DID YOU ENJOY IT?

UH, WHAT?

KISSING THAT GIRL?

NO. I WAS TOO STRESSED.

WHAT ABOUT BEFORE? DID YOU THINK ABOUT HER ALL THE TIME?

I MEAN: WHAT WAS IT LIKE? WERE YOU ALL HOT, AND, LIKE, TOTALLY SURE YOU WERE IN LOVE WITH HER?

UM.

I...

WHEN YOU WENT HOME, DID YOU KEEP THINKING ABOUT HER?

LIKE, WERE YOU FLOATING ON AIR, THINKING YOU SMELLED HER ON YOUR BEDSHEETS, GETTING HARD JUST THINKING OF HER... STUFF LIKE THAT?

IS THAT WHAT BEING IN LOVE FEELS LIKE?

I...

UH...

"HOOOUU"

HUGO,

YOU CAN STARE AT MY TITS IF YOU WANT. I DON'T MIND.

each generation has its own style

THEY'RE OBSESSED WITH SCORES AND STANDINGS! GRADES, GRADES, AND MORE GRADES!
AND DOING EXACTLY WHAT YOU WERE TOLD TO DO AT THE LAST MEETING!
IF YOU ASK ME, TEACHERS HAVE TO LOVE THEIR STUDENTS.
THAT'S THE REAL BEDROCK OF GOOD TEACHING... LOVE.
YOU HAVE TO CARE ABOUT THEM AND THEIR LIVES, OR YOU'LL ONLY BORE THEM AND YOURSELF! WE'RE MORE THAN JUST DISPENSERS OF INFORMATION.

AND DON'T GET ME STARTED ON WHAT PEOPLE THINK OF US! THAT WE'RE A BUNCH OF LAZY BUMS, THAT'S WHAT.

BUT MOST OF MY COLLEAGUES BUST THEIR ASSES!

THEY STAY UP ALL NIGHT PREPPING--THEY'RE MOSTLY WOMEN WITH KIDS OF THEIR OWN--BUT THEY GET STRESSED IN FRONT OF A CLASS, SO THEY JUST READ THEIR NOTES. THEN THE KIDS ZONE OUT OR ACT UP.

LAST WEEK, I HEARD ONE OF THEM CRYING IN THE BATHROOM, BECAUSE HER CLASS WAS SO OUT OF CONTROL.

SHE'S A SMART, SENSITIVE WOMAN WHO DOES WAY MORE LESSON PREP THAN ME, AND STILL SHE'S FLAILING. WHY? BECAUSE SHE'S AFRAID.

BUT WE'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO THINK ABOUT STUFF LIKE THAT, NO-O-O. JUST GET THOSE GRADES IN! GRADES!

WITH LITTLE EXPLANATORY NOTES.

TWO LINES.

LOOK, NICOLE.

CHECK THIS OUT.

IT SINGS!

YEAH. THIS DUMB BIRD'S GOT PIPES!

CRAZY!

HE DOES IT EVERY TIME I GET OUT MY GUITAR.

PIERRE?

YOU KNOW, I'M PLANNING TO GO TO A CLIMATE PROTEST IN THE CITY THIS WEEKEND.

ALL OUR OLD FRIENDS WILL BE THERE. COULD BE A CHANCE TO GET OUT AND SEE SOME OF THE PEOPLE WHO CARE ABOUT YOU.

WILL YOU COME?

POL

I'M NOT SURE, NICOLE.

KNOW THE HARDEST THING ABOUT BEING A TEACHER, DIANE?

WE'RE LIKE GARDENERS WHO SOW SEEDS EVERY SPRING BUT NEVER GET TO SEE OUR GARDEN GROW.

BY THE TIME OUR STUDENTS BLOOM, THEY'RE LONG GONE.

EVERY YEAR, YOU START OVER FROM SQUARE ONE, AND IT FEELS LIKE THE SAME SQUARE ONE, BUT NO.

BECAUSE, EVEN THOUGH THE STUDENTS ARE THE SAME AGE, WITH EVERY PASSING YEAR THEY'RE FURTHER AND FURTHER AWAY FROM YOUR OWN YOUTH OR EVEN YOUR KIDS'.

glou glou

SO YOU THINK YOU UNDERSTAND THEM, BUT SOONER OR LATER YOU REALIZE THAT YOU DON'T. YOU'VE GOTTEN OLD.

I WISH I WAS A CARPENTER SO THAT EVERY DAY, I COULD SEE THE PROGRESS I'D MADE! SOMETHING SOLID!

WORKING WITH HUMANS ISN'T SOLID. AND IT'S WEARING ME OUT.

SORRY, DIANE. I JUST KEEP BLABBING.

I'M A LITTLE DRUNK.

AND SORRY ABOUT YESTERDAY...

I RECOGNIZED YOU, BUT I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY. I SHOULD HAVE--

DON'T APOLOGIZE, SIMON. I'M THE ONE WHO WAS RUDE, STORMING OFF LIKE THAT.

IT WAS A GOOD IDEA TO BRING OVER A BOTTLE OF WINE.

AND YOU? IN TWENTY YEARS, YOU NEVER BECAME A TEACHER?

LAST I HEARD YOU WERE LIVING ABROAD. NOW, BOOM! HERE YOU ARE...

I'M STAYING AT A FRIEND'S WHILE SHE'S AWAY.

I HAD CANCER. SO IT'S NICE JUST TO REST FOR A WHILE.

...

DID YOU NOTICE THEY'RE THREE COUPLES OF DIFFERENT AGES?

WHO?

OUR CHARACTERS.

THEY MOVE THROUGH THE WORLD DIFFERENTLY. THE WAY THEY ARE WITH EACH OTHER, SPEAK TO EACH OTHER, LOOK AT EACH OTHER... IT SEEMS EACH GENERATION HAS ITS OWN STYLE.

THAT NOT ONLY SHOWS US WHO THEY ARE, BUT ALSO HOW TIME PASSES FOR THEM.

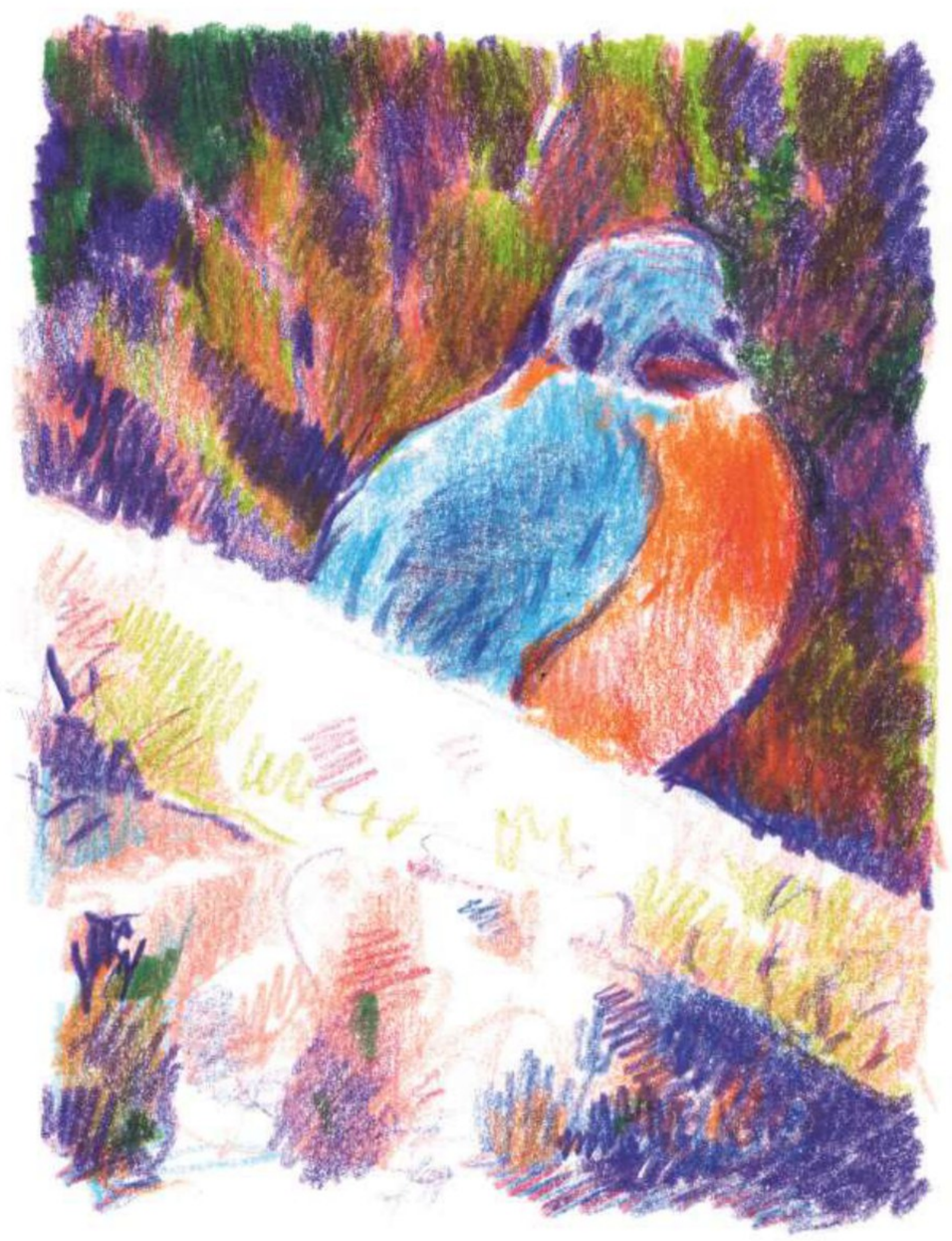
ARE YOU LISTENING?

NO.

I DON'T SEE HOW THEY CAN CARE ABOUT ANYTHING BESIDES WHAT THEY'RE DOING TO THE PLANET. THEY'RE ALL ABOUT TO DIE, AND THEY'RE FUSSING OVER AN INGROWN TOENAIL! IT MAKES ME WANT TO SHIT ON THEIR DINNERWARE AND PISS IN THEIR SHOES.

YOU ARE WHO YOU ARE, CAT.

AND THERE'S SOMETHING REASSURING ABOUT THAT.



if that's what you want
to tell yourself

HOOT HOOT

WE'RE WATCHING YOU, TOO, YOU KNOW.

HUH?!

WHO'S THERE?

?!

WE WATCH YOU BECAUSE WE FIND YOU VERY EXOTIC.

UH... IS THIS ALL IN MY HEAD OR WHAT?

YES.

IF THAT'S WHAT YOU WANT TO TELL YOURSELF.

YOU, HUGO, ARE FASCINATING TO WATCH, FOR EXAMPLE.

WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN WITH THAT YOUNG FEMALE YOU LIKE?

WE'RE ALL DYING TO KNOW WHAT COMES NEXT.

YEAH, ME TOO.

IT'S NEW FOR ME, THE WAY I FEEL ABOUT HER.

WHEN I'M WITH HER, I FEEL LIKE I'M LIVING MORE INTENSELY.

OUTSIDE OF TIME?

NO, MORE LIKE IN A TIME ALL MY OWN.

TRULY ALIVE...

...LIKE YOU ARE, IN THE WILD. FULLY PRESENT.

I FEEL LIKE LIFE ITSELF GETS BORED WHEN JILL ISN'T IN THE ROOM.

DO YOU OWLS EVER FEEL THAT WAY?

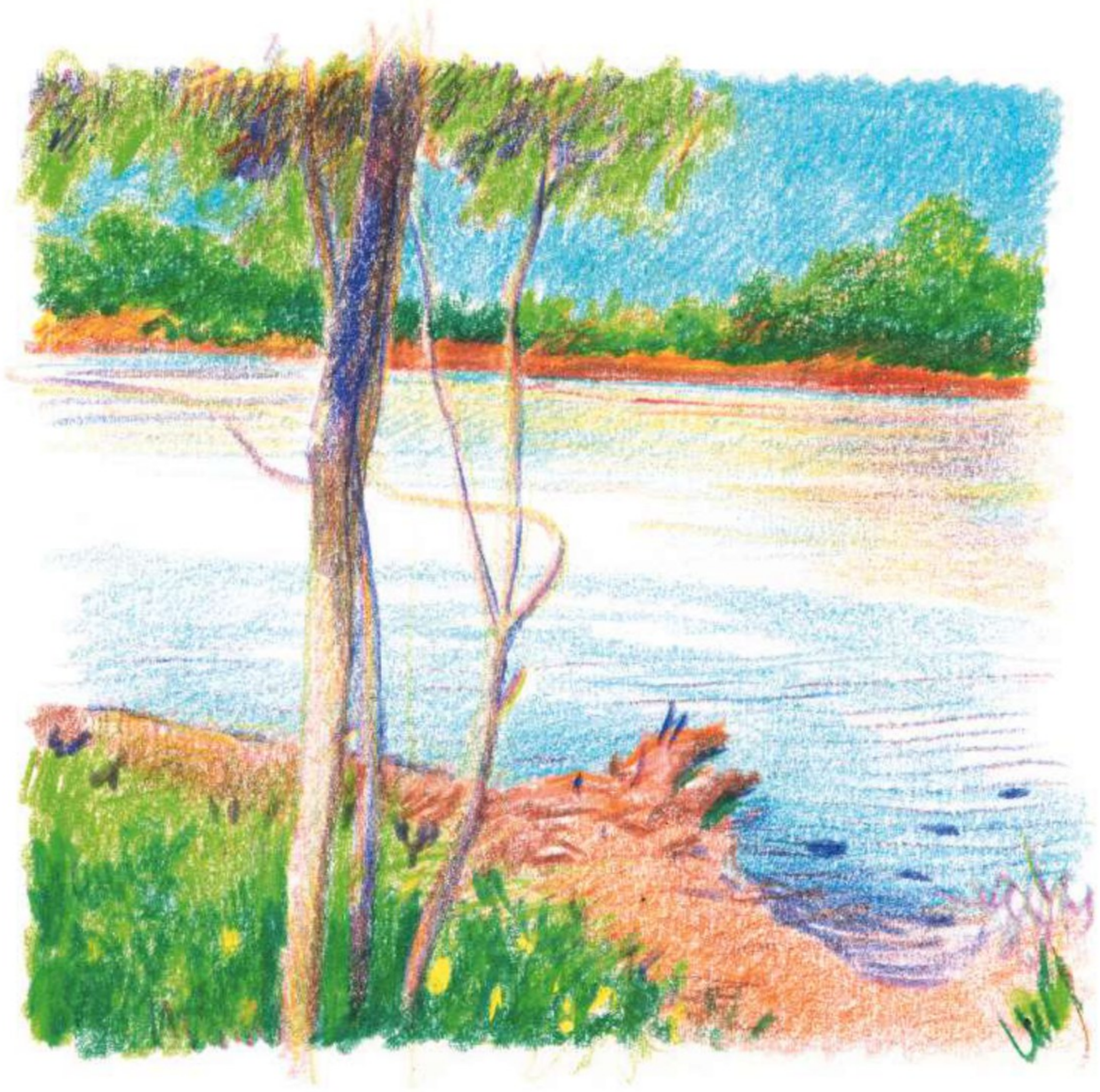
?

...

UH-HUH.

SO I'M TALKING TO OWLS NOW! WHAT THE HELL? HAHA!

I SHOULD GET SOME SLEEP, BEFORE I GO COMPLETELY OFF THE RAILS...

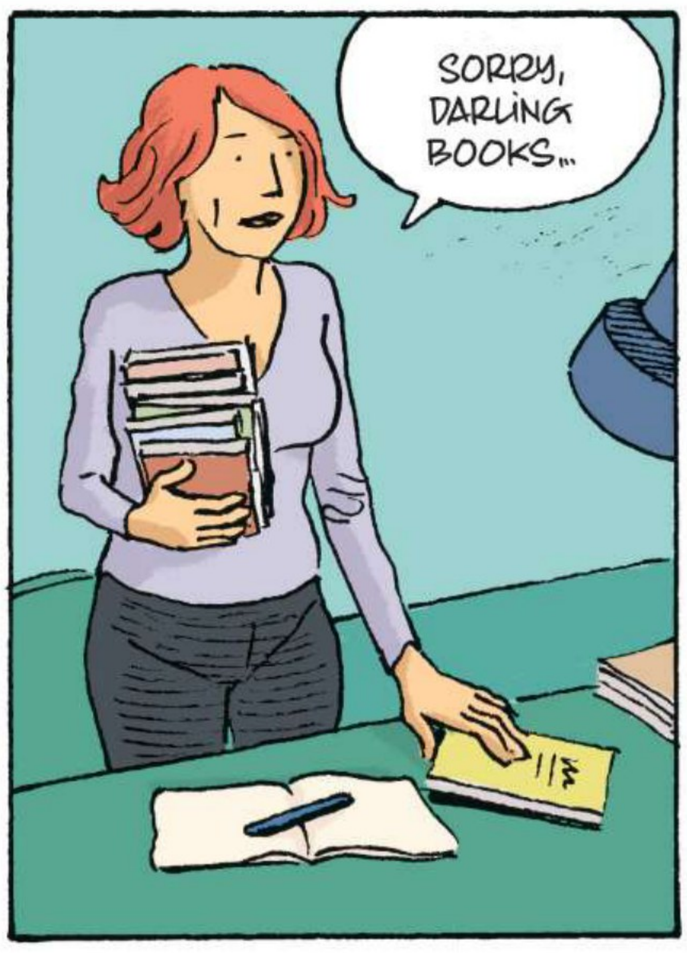


that's humanity for you

scritch
scratch

GRRR...

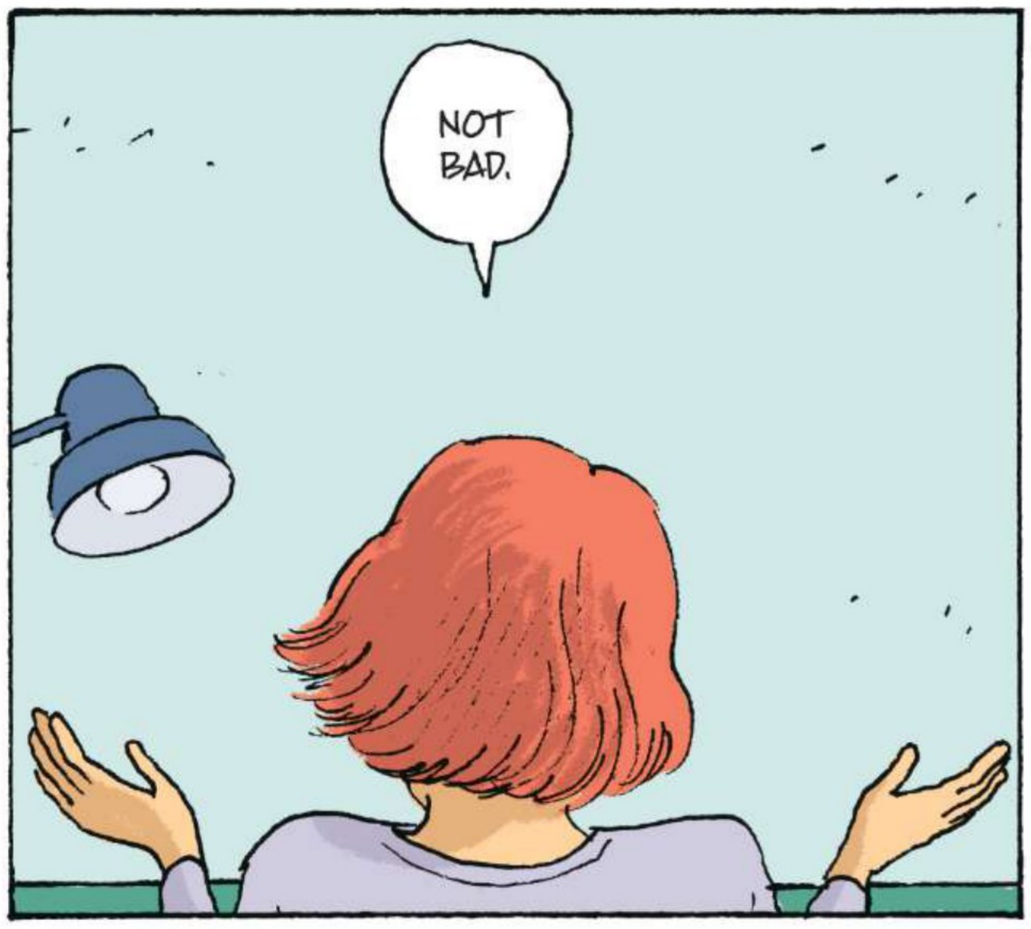
GAAH!


SORRY, DARLING BOOKS...

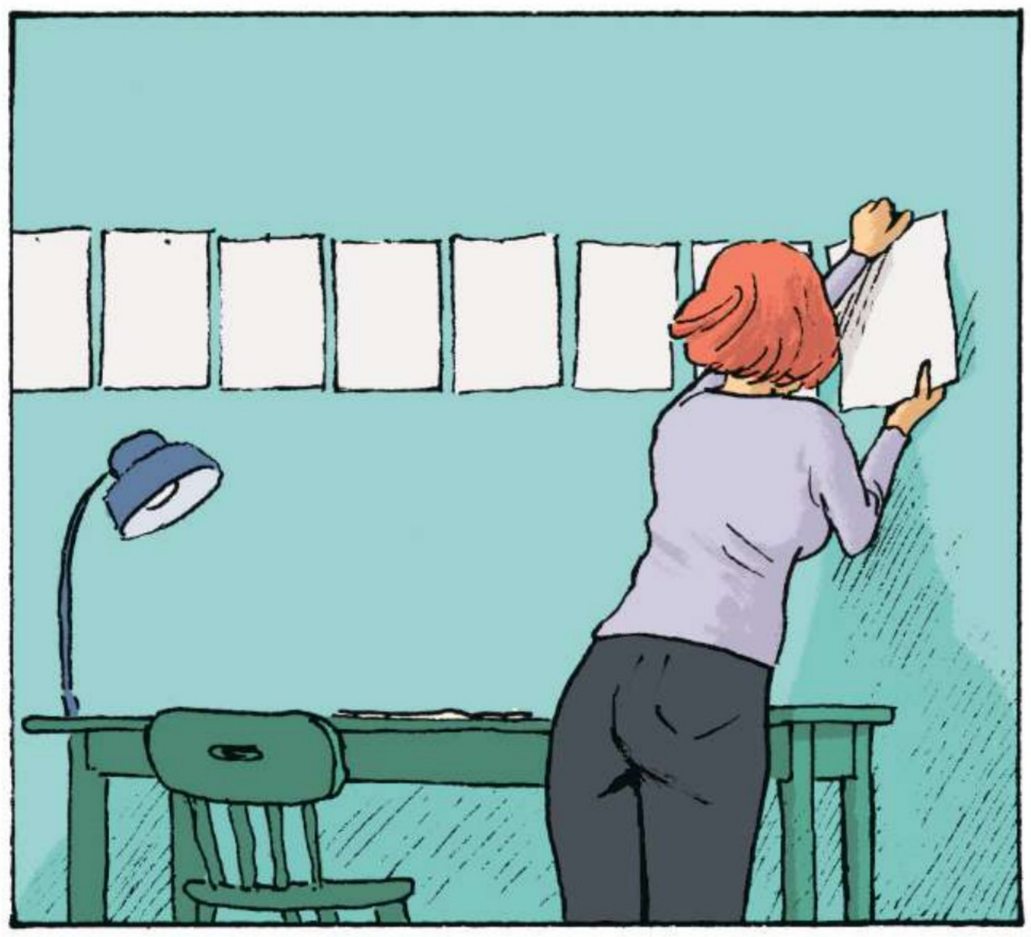
YOU'RE GOING OVER HERE!

OK.
NOW...

HMM.


NOT BAD.

WHY NOT...



ΑΑΑΑΑΗ!!
ΔΗ
ΑΑΑΑΗ
?!?!
!

PLAF

AH!

AAAAAH!

?

SIGH

ANXIETY AND TOO MUCH WINE. WHAT DID I EXPECT?

?

DIANE?

HELLO?

BLOM

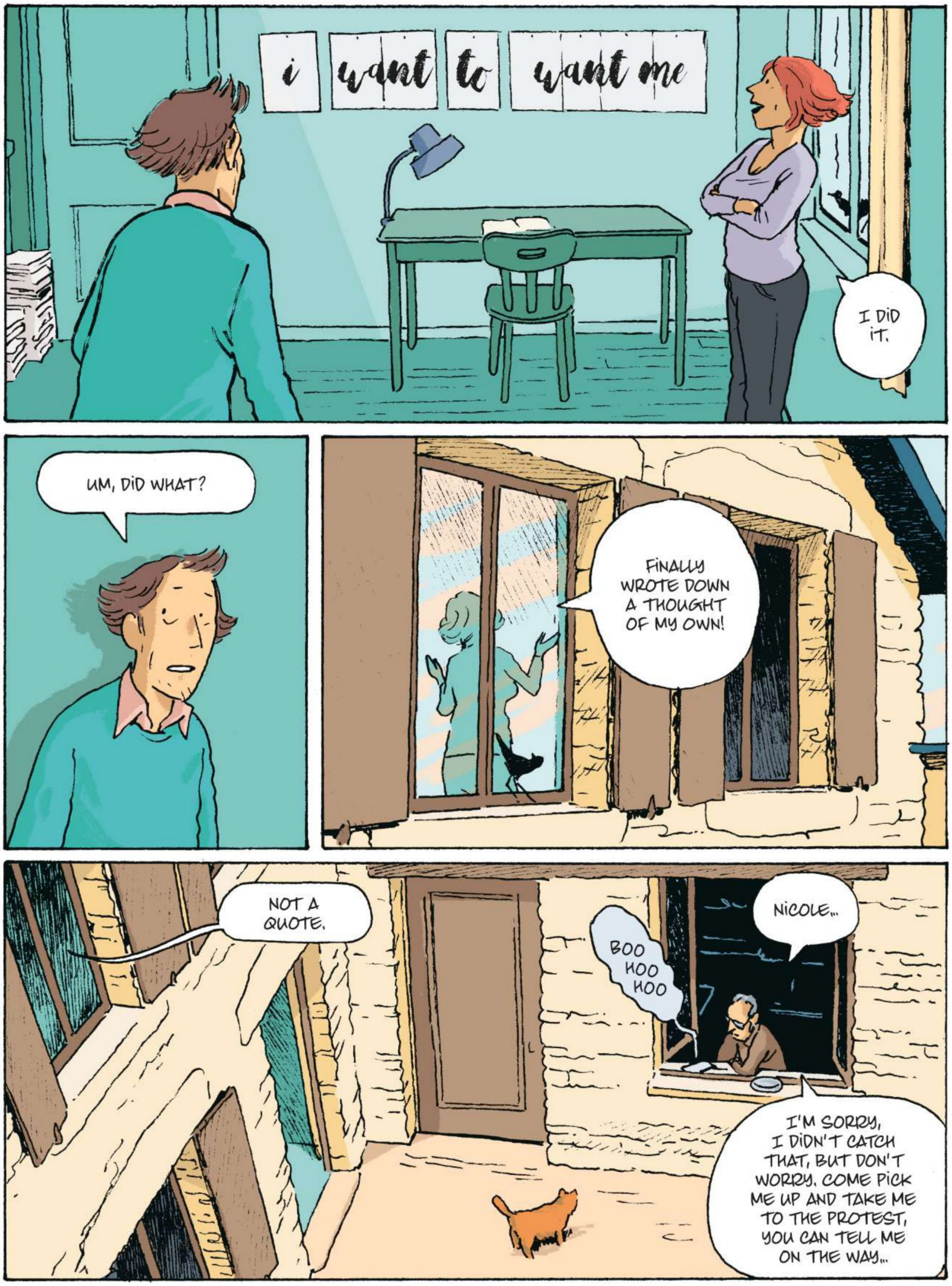
DIANE?

SIMON!

COME QUICK!

LOOK!

Riiiiii


i want to want me
I DID IT.
UM, DID WHAT?
FINALLY WROTE DOWN A THOUGHT OF MY OWN!
NOT A QUOTE.
BOO HOO HOO
NICOLE...
I'M SORRY, I DIDN'T CATCH THAT, BUT DON'T WORRY. COME PICK ME UP AND TAKE ME TO THE PROTEST, YOU CAN TELL ME ON THE WAY...

NO, PIERRE, I'M NOT GOING... SNIFF...

THAT'S WHY I'M CALLING. I CAN'T FACE IT. MY DAUGHTER...

SHE...

THE REASON SHE WON'T TALK TO ME...

I DIDN'T KNOW A THING, I SWEAR!

WHAT DIDN'T YOU KNOW?

HER...

HER GRANDPA.

WHAT ABOUT HER GRANDPA?

SOMETHING HAPPENED. SHE WON'T TELL ME EXACTLY WHAT... BUT SHE HATES ME FOR NOT NOTICING.

BOM

I'M TERRIFIED... IMAGINING THE WORST. WHATEVER IT WAS THAT HAPPENED, I DIDN'T PROTECT HER...

AND NOW THAT SHE'S FORTY, SHE, SHE...

SHE NEEDS TO DISTANCE HERSELF FROM ME, AS SHE PUT IT.

I'M SORRY. I HAD TO GET THAT OUT.

I DIDN'T SLEEP LAST NIGHT. I HAVEN'T SLEPT SINCE SHE CALLED ME.

COME OVER, HONEY. WE'LL GO TO THE PROTEST, AND IT'LL DO US BOTH GOOD, DON'T YOU THINK? I'LL WEAR MY GOOD LEATHER JACKET.

IT'S KIND OF YOU, PIERRE, BUT I REALLY CAN'T FACE IT.

OK.

I UNDERSTAND.

CLIC

WELL...

NO BIG DEAL.

I'LL GO ALL ON MY OWN, LIKE A BIG BOY.

?!?

CLIC
CLIC
CLIC

PING

UGGH

BRRR

BZZZ

Hugo!

So amazing!!! Did you take that just now??

BZZ

Yeah! And it gave me an idea for where to stake out tonight You in?

Hugo
You shouldn't fall in love with me... ok?

Why? Are you with someone?
That's not it

Then why shouldn't I?
Cause it's too late you know

What is?
It's too late for me not to fall in love with you Jill

Bzz

Do you still want to come out with me tonight?

YOU SEE?

I NEED TO WRITE SO I CAN UNDERSTAND WHAT I'M GOING THROUGH, CAPTURE MY LIFE IN WORDS.

IN A PERSONAL DIARY.

AND IT'S THE PERSONAL PART THAT REALLY MATTERS!

BUT MY PROBLEM, SIMON, IS THAT I CAN'T GET PERSONAL WITH MYSELF.

UGGHH...

AND SO MY DIARY IS JUST A BUNCH OF QUOTATIONS...

I'M INCAPABLE OF WRITING MY OWN THOUGHTS!

WHY?

BECAUSE I DON'T EXIST ENOUGH.

"MEN LOOK AT WOMEN, WOMEN LOOK AT THEMSELVES BEING LOOKED AT. THIS SHAPES NOT ONLY MOST RELATIONS BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN, BUT ALSO HOW WOMEN RELATE TO THEMSELVES."

NOW THERE'S AN INTERESTING QUOTE, RIGHT? YOU COULD ASSIGN AN ESSAY ON IT.

NANCY HUSTON, *REFLETS DANS UN OEIL D'HOMME.*

YOU KNOW IT?!

WOW... YOU'RE FULL OF SURPRISES AFTER ALL.

"WOMEN LOOK AT THEMSELVES BEING LOOKED AT"! THAT'S YOU, ISN'T IT?

WHEN MEN USED TO LOOK AT ME, I ALWAYS FELT LIKE THEY WERE ONLY INTERESTED IN MY BREASTS OR MY ASS.

BUT THAT WAS BEFORE...

NOW THAT I'M NOT A NORMAL, DESIRABLE WOMAN ANYMORE, I DON'T KNOW WHO I AM.

YOU'RE AS BEAUTIFUL AS EVER!

IF YOU SAW ME NAKED...

IDIOT!

IF ONLY.

WELL.

PEOPLE USED TO SEE ME AS SOME KIND OF MONICA BELLUCCI, AND I HATED IT. BUT NOW THAT THEY DON'T ANYMORE, I'M AFRAID.

I FEEL EMPTY. A STRANGER TO MYSELF.

AS IF I WAS NOTHING MORE THAN WHAT PEOPLE SAW IN ME, AFTER ALL.

I SHOULD BE HAPPY NOW THAT IT'S ALL OVER, BUT I'M NOT.

I'M LOST.

WHOA, WHOA, WHOA... DON'T LOOK AT ME LIKE THAT!

LIKE WHAT?

LIKE YOU'RE ABOUT TO TRY AND KISS ME!

I'M WARNING YOU, IF YOU TRY THAT AGAIN, I'LL SLAP YOU.

?

"AGAIN"?!

IT WAS TWENTY YEARS AGO!

I'M NOTHING BUT A FANTASY FOR YOU, SIMON.

THAT WAS ALREADY TRUE WHEN YOU HIT ON ME BACK THEN. IT'S NEVER BEEN ABOUT WHO I REALLY AM.

I...

SHUSH.

I CAN'T TAKE THIS!

WHAT A RIDICULOUS CONVERSA-TION!

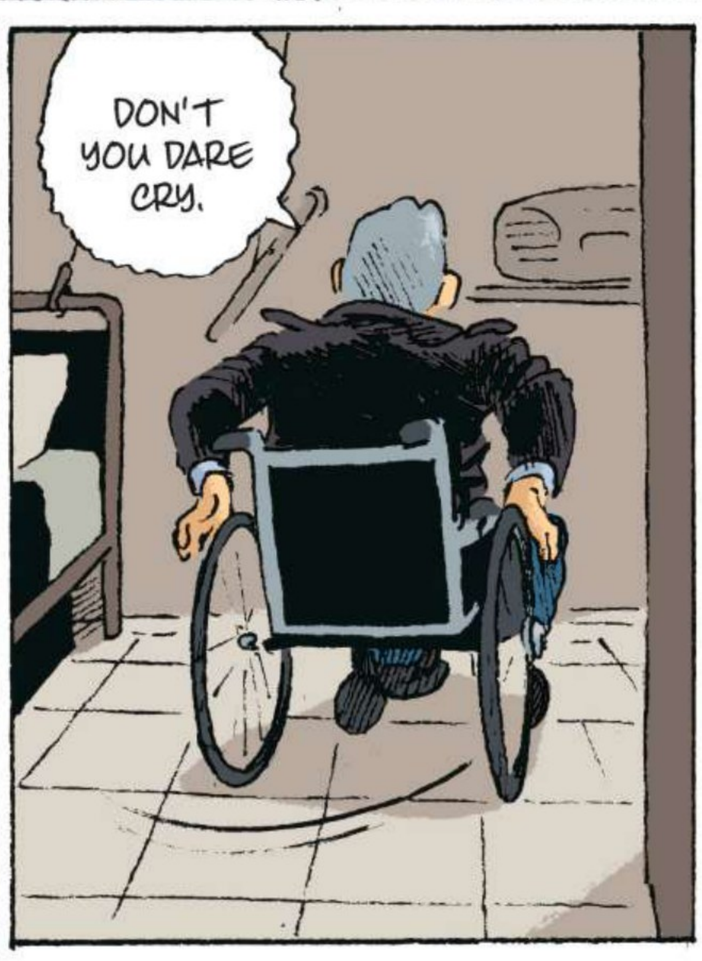
HOLD ME IN YOUR ARMS, SIMON.

AND DON'T KISS ME.

PFF

SHIT.
ARRGH!

DON'T CRY, ASSHOLE.


DON'T YOU DARE CRY.

THIS IS DR. MATHIEU'S OFFICE.

I NEED TO TALK TO THE DOCTOR.

HE'S BUSY RIGHT NOW, I'M AFRAID--

IT'S ABOUT MY REQUEST FOR EUTHANASIA.

Snif.

JUST A MOMENT.

...

YES?

PIERRE DUBLAST. I WANT TO COME IN AND GO OVER THE OPTIONS WE TALKED ABOUT.

WELL, MONSIEUR DUBLAST, THERE'S A STRICT PROTOCOL TO FOLLOW AND--

WHAT IS IT?

FIRST, A MEETING JUST TO TALK, WITH YOU AND A FAMILY MEMBER, THEN--

FAMILY MEMBER?

YES. LEGALLY, SOMEONE HAS TO BE WITH YOU. I--

triou
PARACETAMOL
Codeine 20

OK, CAN WE SET THE DATE FOR THAT TODAY?

...YES.

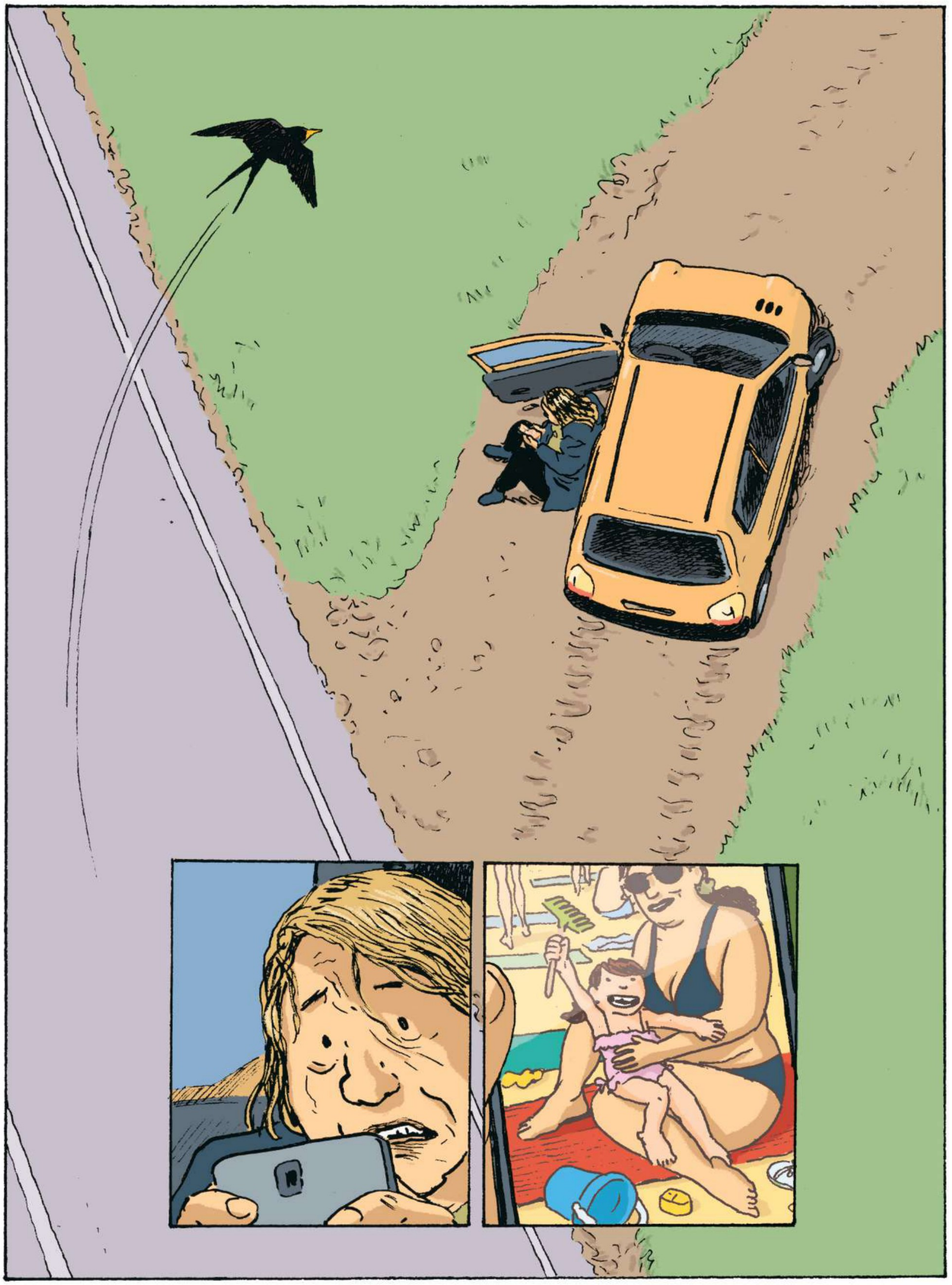
THERE'S STILL PLENTY OF TIME TO TALK IT THROUGH, OK, MONSIEUR DUBLAST?

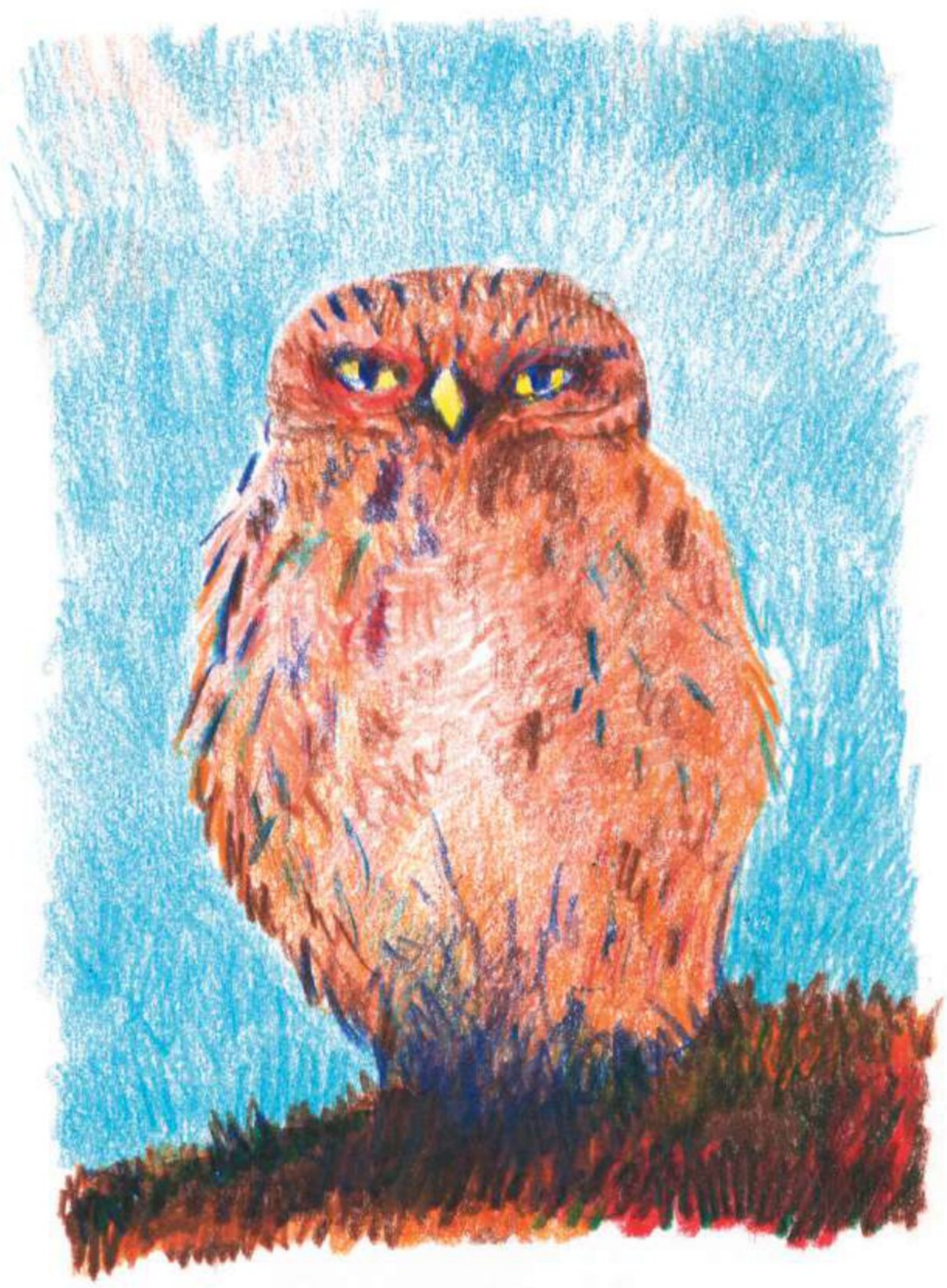
clic.

OHHH, MORBID! I LOVE IT.

PERSONALLY, I'D MUCH RATHER END UP SQUISHED UNDER A SHOE THAN SEE MYSELF FADE AWAY LITTLE BY LITTLE, WOULDN'T YOU?

THAT'S HUMANITY FOR YOU.





at least you know who you are

UH, SORRY... IT'S A ONE-PERSON TENT.

I CAN TELL!

DON'T LOOK AT HER...

THINK ABOUT ANIMALS, HUGO!

SO HOW DO WE LOOK OUT?

OOPS!

ONE SEC...

THERE.

HUGO?!

ARE YOU... HARD?

!?!

SORRY!! I...

AND SHH! WE'RE BEING TOO NOISY!

"SHH, SHH," YOU SAY,
BUT I'M NOT THE ONE WHO'S ALL WORKED UP.

I'M REALLY SORRY, JILL, IT'S JUST...

...IT'S A PHYSICAL RESPONSE, LIKE ANIMALS GET.

DON'T WORRY, I KIND OF LIKE SEEING YOU ALL EXCITED.

IT'S A BIT DISTURBING, BUT THAT'S OK...

SHUSH...

C'MON!

STOP SHUSHING ME!

I LIKE IT WHEN WE CHAT, AND I TEACH YOU ABOUT LIFE, AND YOU TEACH ME ABOUT ANIMALS.

PLUS, I GET FREAKED OUT WHEN IT'S TOO QUIET.

I...

VLOUF

?!

!?

HANG ON! SORRY, I GOTTA PUT THIS... BACK...

POF

POF

YOU APOLOGIZE TOO MUCH.

WHOA!

UH... HUGO... I MIGHT ACTUALLY NEED AN APOLOGY NOW.

GAH! SERIOUSLY...

GUESS IT'S SPRINGTIME FOR MORE THAN JUST THE BIRDS...

HEHE

HAHA

HE HE HE

HAHAHAHAHA!

SHH!

YEAH, SORRY...

AHH, THAT FEELS GOOD... I'M GLAD WE'VE CLEARED THE AIR.

IS IT HOT IN HERE?

NOT REALLY. WE'RE THE ONES WHO ARE HOT.

NO!
SORRY.
IT'S NO BIG DEAL, I JUST...
I DON'T WANT THINGS TO GO TOO FAR.
C'MON.
LET'S GO FOR A WALK.

SHOULDN'T WE STAY HIDDEN IN THE TENT? WE MIGHT MISS THE MAMA DEER.

NOT NECESSARILY. WE DON'T KNOW WHICH WAY SHE'LL COME FROM. WE JUST HAVE TO BE QUIET.

AND I'M SORRY, AGAIN, I...

DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT, HANDSOME.

?

OH!

?

DON'T TOUCH HIM!

IF HE SMELLS LIKE YOU,
HIS MOM WILL REJECT HIM.

DID SHE ABANDON HIM?

NO, IT'S A PROTECTIVE STRATEGY.

THE MOTHERS LEAVE THEIR YOUNG HIDDEN IN THE GRASS, WHERE THEY'RE INVISIBLE TO PREDATORS. PLUS, HERE ON THE ISLAND, THERE'S NOT MUCH DANGER. HIS MOM PICKED A GOOD SPOT.

ARE YOU SURE?

SURE ABOUT WHAT?

THAT YOU LIKE GIRLS.

YES.

BUT HOW?

I CAN'T EXPLAIN IT... IT'S JUST THERE. I CAN FEEL IT WHEN I LOOK AT YOU: I WANT TO KISS YOU, TOUCH YOU. ALL THAT STUFF.

REALLY?

YEAH. AND WHEN I CAN'T, LIKE RIGHT NOW, IT ALMOST HURTS.

OH.

YOU'RE LUCKY.

YOU'RE NOT CONFUSED, AT LEAST. YOU KNOW.

YEAH, WELL... MOSTLY I KNOW I'M ATTRACTED TO A GIRL WHO DOESN'T GIVE A CRAP.

I DO GIVE A CRAP.

NO, I MEAN, I GUESS I'M LUCKY TO KNOW I'M ATTRACTED TO YOU, BUT I'M ALSO SAD BECAUSE IT ISN'T GOING ANYWHERE.

AT LEAST YOU KNOW WHO YOU ARE.
THOSE TWO SURE ARE CUTE, AREN'T THEY?

THANK YOU, TOAD.

THANK YOU?

FOR WHAT?

I'VE ENJOYED WATCHING THESE HUMANS.

I'M TIRED OF HUNTERS TRACKING US, RESEARCHERS PUTTING COLLARS ON US... IT'S FUN TO BE ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE FENCE, FOR ONCE.

SOON I'LL BE HAVING FUN, TOO. I CAN TELL.

OH?

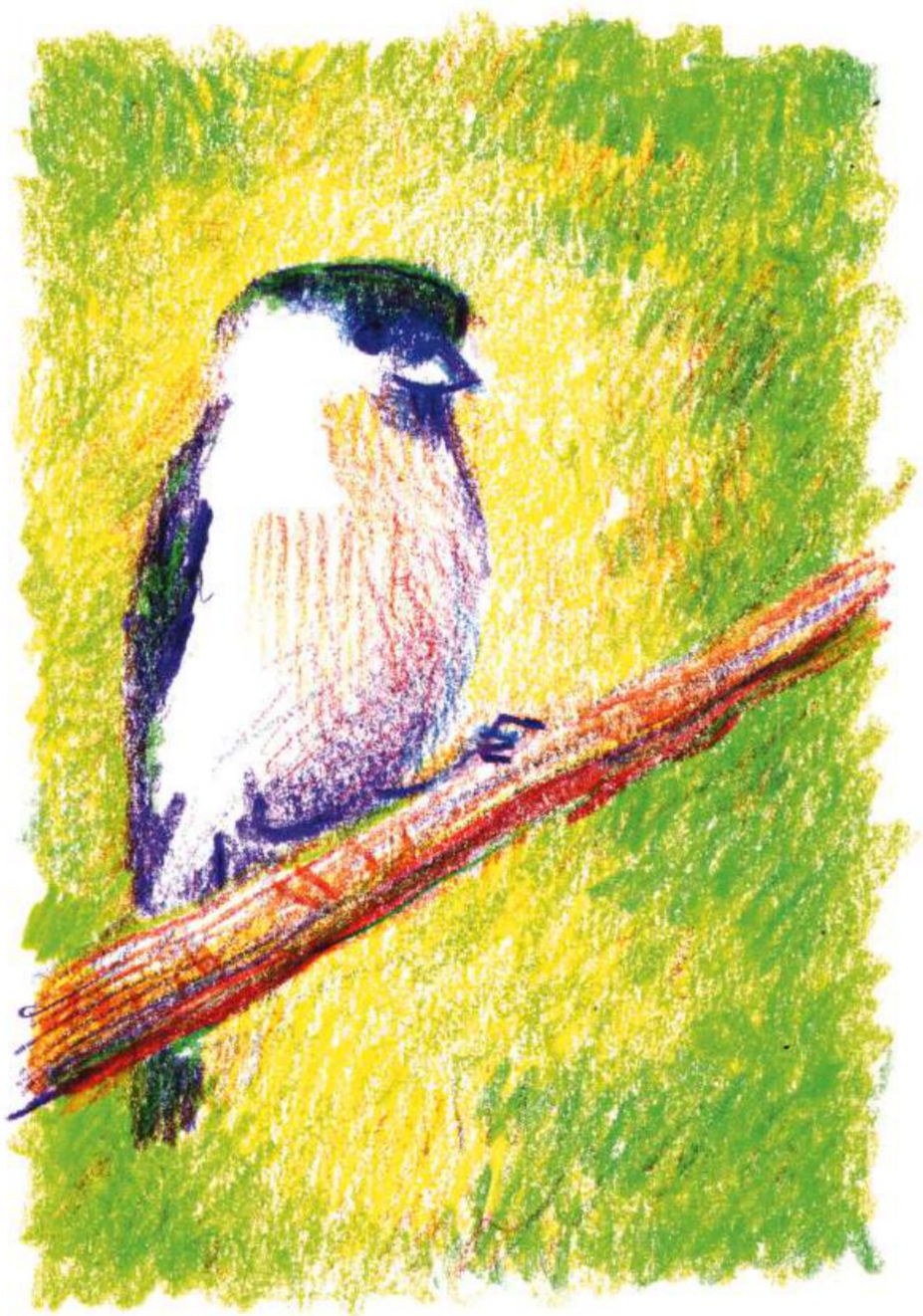
YES! I FEEL A KIND OF SHADOW APPROACHING.

A SHADOW?

SOMETHING IN THE AIR TELLS ME THERE'S JUICY MISFORTUNE IN STORE.

A BLACK VEIL IS ABOUT TO DESCEND ON THEM ALL...

IF YOU'RE RIGHT, CAT, WE'LL HAVE TO KEEP AN EVEN CLOSER WATCH.



life is one big adventure

YOU CAN'T IMAGINE THE CHAOS AT THE REFUGEE CENTER TODAY...

A QUIET EVENING HERE WITH YOU WILL DO ME GOOD.

I'VE MADE MY SIGNATURE DISH.

MY CULINARY SKILLS ARE ONE OF THE FEW THINGS I HAVEN'T LOST!

SO, WHAT'S THE OCCASION FOR THIS FIVE-STAR DINNER?

I NEED TO ASK YOU SOMETHING.

OOH! NOT TO MARRY YOU, I HOPE.

NO.

DANG.

WHAT, THEN?

I SUGGEST WE EAT FIRST. I DON'T WANT TO RUIN THE EVENING RIGHT AWAY.

IT'S NOT SO BAD... THERE ARE ONLY ABOUT FIFTY ESSAYS TOTAL...

YES, BUT I HAVE A MENTAL BLOCK ABOUT IT.

ONE LOOK AT THAT RED PEN MAKES ME NAUSEOUS.

I CAN ALREADY PICTURE THE STUPID COMMENTS I'LL HAVE TO MAKE IN THE MARGINS: "CAREFUL WITH SPELLING." "NEEDS MORE STRUCTURE."

HOW ROMANTIC.

I REALLY HOPE THAT THEY BANG.

DON'T BE CRASS!

BUT ENOUGH OF THAT!

IT'S DECIDED: I'M LEAVING SCHOOL IN JUNE TO LOOK FOR ANOTHER JOB.

OOOH, WOW!

TONIGHT'S MENU: FRESH SALMON!

AND YOU'RE SURE THIS ISN'T A DATE, SIMON?

ABSOLUTELY NOT! WE WEREN'T GOING TO EAT OFF THE FLOOR, WERE WE?

OH, AND... I CALLED YOUR DAUGHTER.

REALLY? AND SHE ACTUALLY PICKED UP?

YES, BUT SHE ASKED ME NOT TO TELL YOU THAT WE TALKED.

GREAT.

WHY ARE YOU TELLING ME, THEN?

DON'T MAKE THAT FACE, NICOLE. IT MEANS I'M IN CONTACT WITH HER, AND THAT'S GOOD NEWS!

YEAH, I JUST HOPE YOU LIVE LONG ENOUGH FOR ME TO EXTRACT SOME INFORMATION OUT OF YOU.

NOT SURE OF THAT.

AW, SHIT! I CAN'T--

WHAT? YOU DON'T EXPECT ME TO WIPE YOUR ASS, DO YOU?!

NO.

BUT COULD YOU HELP ME BACK INTO MY CHAIR? MY ARMS ARE TOO WEAK.

PFF.

LIFE IS ONE BIG ADVENTURE...

HELLO!

DIANE, THIS IS MY SON, HUGO.

HELLO, HUGO.

HEY DAD, YOUR STUDENTS CAME TO SEE ME AT SCHOOL TODAY.

THEY DID?

REALLY?

THEY TOLD ME TO GIVE YOU THIS.

WHAT IS IT?

DUNNO.

GOOD NIGHT!

A LETTER?

HUH.

OH, SHIT.

YOU'RE TELLING ME.

HOLD ON...

EASY... DOES IT...

?!

AAAAAH!

EH!

VLOC

YOWCH!

YOU THINK THEY'RE GONNA KISS?

HOPE NOT. THEY'RE WAY TOO OLD!

THOSE JOKERS.

WHAT?

IT'S A THING I DO... WHEN ONE OF THEM IS HAVING PROBLEMS. I GIVE THEM A CHOCOLATE.

AND I ALWAYS SAY IT'LL IMPROVE THEIR MOOD BECAUSE IT CONTAINS A NATURAL ANTI-DEPRESSANT.

OH-HO!

THEN LATER, I TELL THEM THAT THE IMPORTANT THING ISN'T THE CHOCOLATE...

...IT'S THE FACT SOMEONE NOTICED.

LIKE THEY'VE DONE FOR YOU TODAY...

YEP.

MMM.

AND THIS?

PHOTOS OF THE PLAY I PUT ON WITH THEM LAST YEAR.

YOU DO THEATER IN YOUR CLASS?

USED TO! IT TOOK TOO MUCH ENERGY, AND...

OH!

THEY WROTE ON THE BACK...

NICE THINGS.

MMM...

I HADN'T MADE LOVE IN A REALLY LONG TIME.

COULDN'T YOU DO BETTER THAN A POOR CRIPPLE LIKE ME?

YOU'RE A CRANKY OLD FART BUT DECENT IN THE SACK. AND I'VE GROWN ATTACHED OVER THE YEARS, YOU KNOW.

CAUSE I REMIND YOU OF YOUR YOUTH?

PSH! YOU MEN ARE SUCH IDIOTS.

I'VE KNOWN YOU ALL MY LIFE.

WE'VE BEEN MANY DIFFERENT THINGS TO EACH OTHER, SO MY BODY'S COMFORT-ABLE WITH YOURS. I DON'T NEED MORE THAN THAT.

MY KIDS HAVE MOVED OUT. I'M SINGLE, RETIRED...

...AND EVERY TIME THERE'S A WILDFIRE OR A FLOOD, I GET SO ANXIOUS I WANT TO THROW UP!

IT FEELS LIKE THE TEN YEARS I SPENT GIVING COLLEGE LECTURES ABOUT THE ANTHROPOCENE WERE FOR NOTHING!

A DROP IN THE OCEAN FULL OF MICROPLASTICS...

SO I DO WHAT WE ALL DO...

MY LIFE HAS NO MEANING, BUT AT LEAST I CAN GET LAID.

MM, MY FAVORITE SOCIOLOGIST, RETIRED AND DEPRESSED.

IT'S STRANGE: WHEN I SEE MYSELF LIKE THIS, I CAN'T REMEMBER WHAT I WAS LIKE BEFORE.

FOR ME, IT'S THE OPPOSITE. I KEEP FORGETTING WHAT I AM NOW.

AND I DON'T WANT TO REMEMBER.

YOU STILL HAVEN'T SAID WHAT YOU WANTED TO ASK ME.

I'VE REQUESTED MEDICAL EUTHANASIA. FOR MY FIRST APPOINTMENT...

...I HAVE TO BRING SOMEONE.

...

THE PAIN'S GETTING WORSE, NICOLE.

I HATE TO ASK YOU, BUT I HAVE NO CHOICE.

IMAGINE: A TEACHER'S NIGHTMARE.

THE KID DOESN'T GIVE A SHIT, TALKS BACK, IS FAILING ALL HIS CLASSES, DISRUPTIVE, THE WORKS!

THEN COMES AUDITION TIME.

I ALWAYS DID AN AUDITION BEFORE I'D CAST A PLAY, TO GIVE THE STUDENTS A CHANCE TO TRY OUT FOR THEIR PREFERRED ROLE.

AND THIS PROBLEM KID IS... INCREDIBLE!

A NATURAL.

HE LIGHTS UP THE STAGE.

SO I GIVE HIM THE LEAD PART. I HAVE NO CHOICE.

AND GUESS WHAT?

IT ALL CHANGES.

HE'S A GOOD STORYTELLER, EH? I BET HE ENDS UP WINNING HER OVER...

SHHHH!

SUDDENLY HE'S SUPER SERIOUS, STUDYING HIS LINES, STOPS DISRUPTING CLASS...

...AND EVEN STARTS PASSING HIS OTHER CLASSES, TOO!

AMAZING...

BUT WAIT!! THAT'S NOT THE CRAZIEST THING.

A WEEK BEFORE THE PREMIER, HE BREAKS HIS LEG! I HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO FILL IN FOR HIM, SO I ENDED UP ON STAGE, PLAYING HIS PART.

MY STUDENTS THOUGHT I KNEW IT ALL, SINCE I WAS DIRECTING.

BUT NO! IT WAS TOTALLY DIFFERENT BEING ON STAGE, OBVIOUSLY.

I KEPT FLUBBING MY LINES, MESSING UP THE BLOCKING...

I WAS LIKE, "HELP ME! I DON'T KNOW!" CAN YOU IMAGINE? A TEACHER SAYING "I DON'T KNOW!"

SO THEY COACHED ME, REASSURED ME...

IT WAS MAGICAL.

AND MY PROBLEM KID... GUESS WHAT? YEARS LATER, HE STILL WRITES TO ME ON FACEBOOK NOW AND THEN...

GOOD.

VERY GOOD.

THANK YOU, FRIENDS, FOR ALL THOSE DETAILS.

YOU SEE, CAT? NO "SHADOW" DESCENDING. THINGS SEEM TO BE GOING RATHER WELL FOR THEM, I'D SAY.

HMPF.

I'M STILL HOPEFUL IT'LL GO SOUTH.

SNIFF.

SNIIIIIFF...

TRYING TO IMPRESS ME?

TRYING TO... SNIFF!

SENSE...

...WHAT'S COMING!

YOU AMUSE ME.

LAUGH WHILE YOU CAN, TOAD. I'M NEVER WRONG.

CLIC

HUGO? IS THAT YOU?

UH... YEAH.

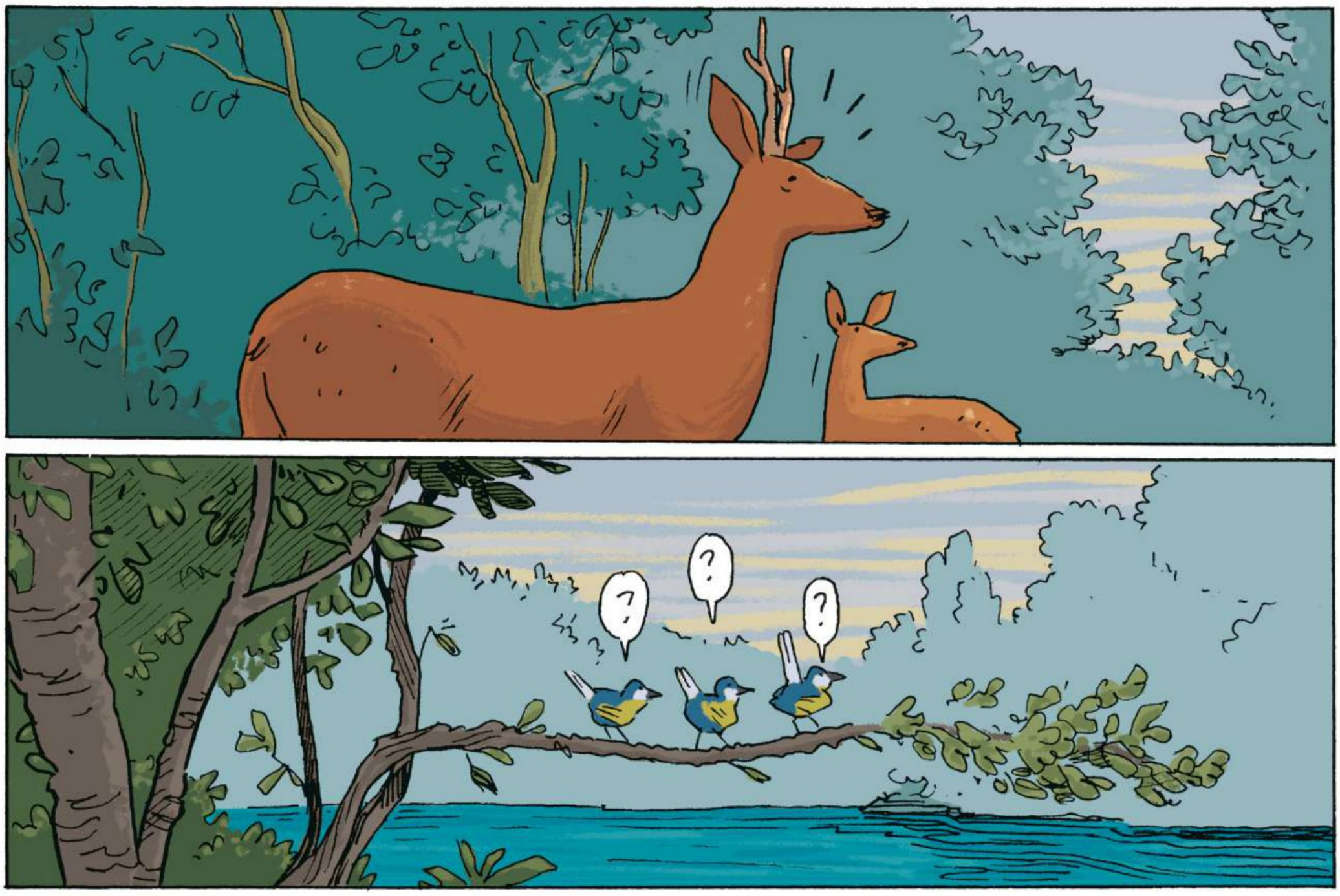
WHY ARE YOU TAKING PICTURES OF ME LIKE A PSYCHO??

I'M NOT AN ANIMAL!

SHIT.

YOU IDIOT!

is there anything left of who we were?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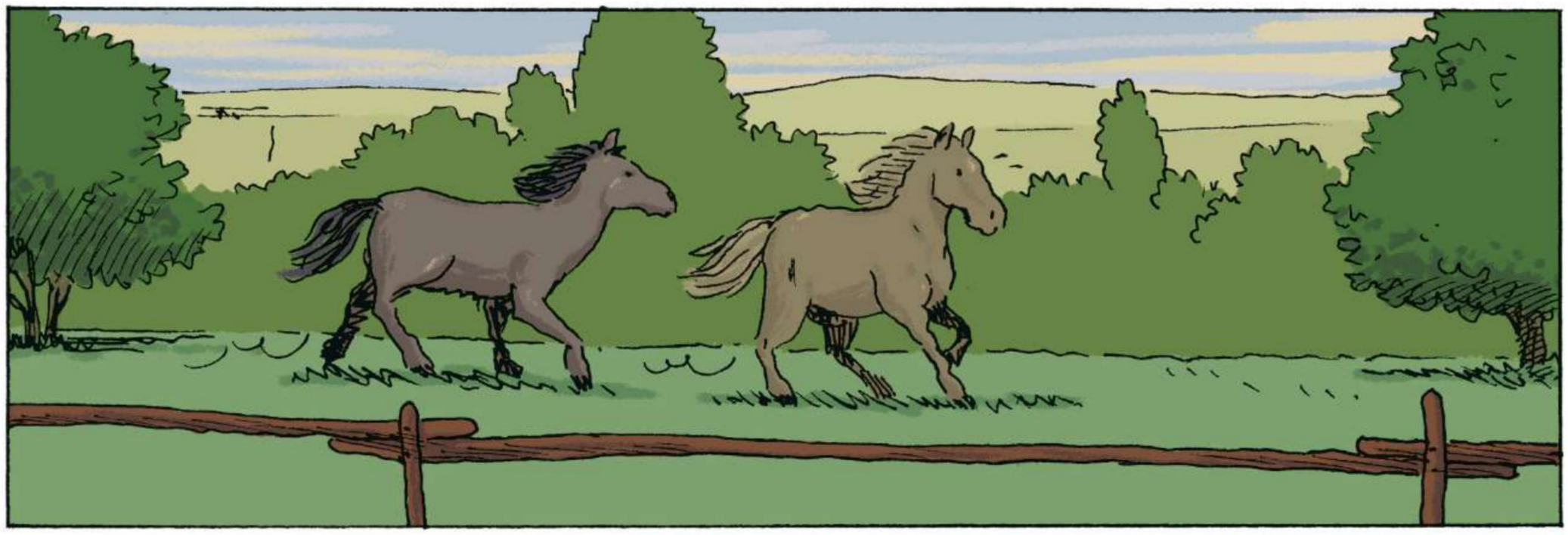


PIERRE?
BETTER HOLD ON TIGHT TO THAT BASKET, LADY.

!?!
NGH.

I'M CALLING AN AMBULANCE, DON'T WORRY...
GH
NO...
BUT.
THANKS.

WE'LL TAKE THE BODY TO THE HOSPITAL MORGUE.

THEY'LL TAKE CARE OF THE PAPERWORK.

ALRIGHT.

WUWUWUWUWUWUWUW

NICOLE.

WANT A CUP OF COFFEE?

COFFEE?

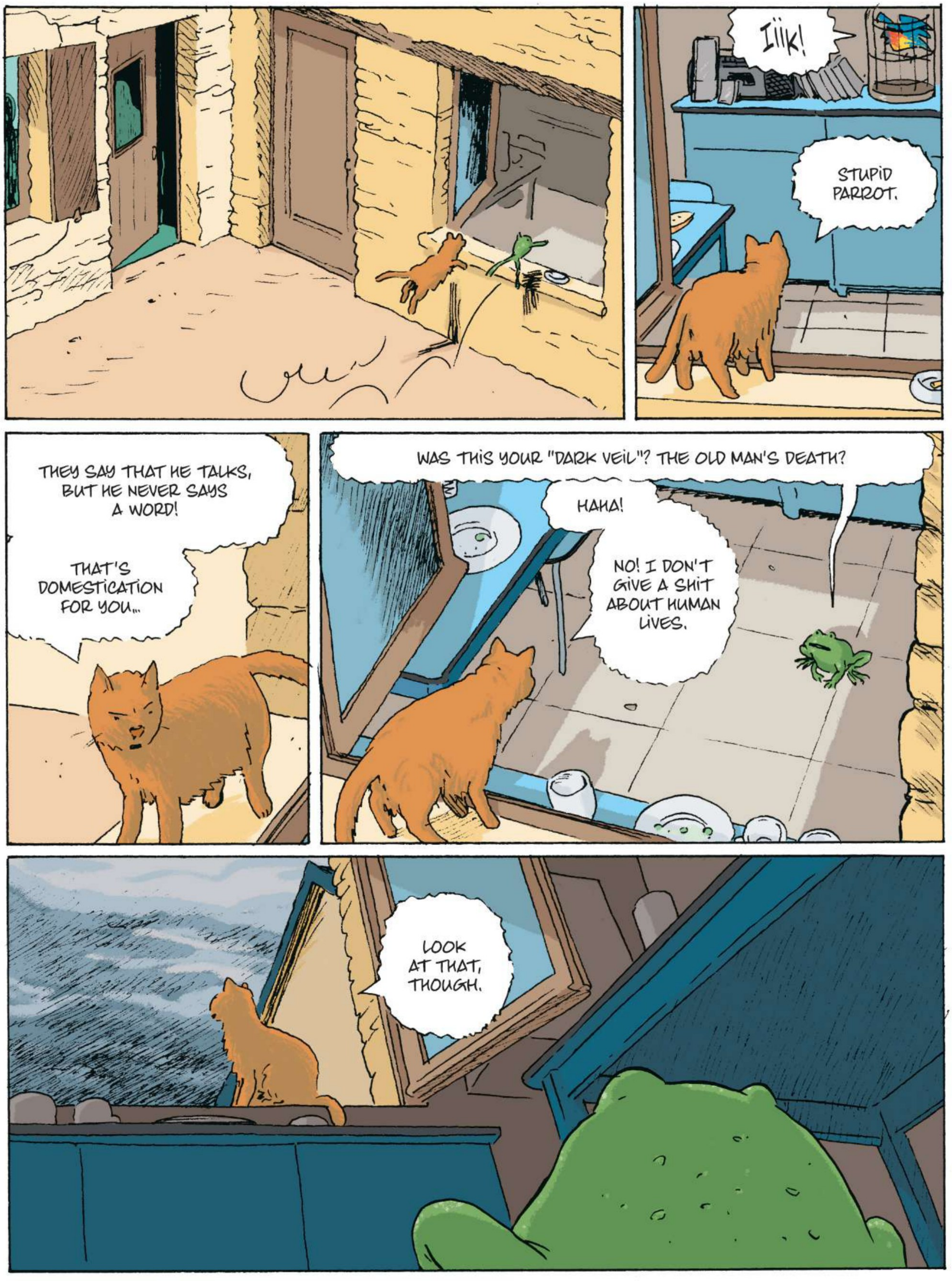
HUH?

UH...

THANKS.

C'MON.

I CAME TO TAKE HIM TO THE DOCTOR... TO ASK FOR EUTHANASIA.


Iiik!
STUPID PARROT.
THEY SAY THAT HE TALKS, BUT HE NEVER SAYS A WORD!
THAT'S DOMESTICATION FOR YOU...
WAS THIS YOUR "DARK VEIL"? THE OLD MAN'S DEATH?
HAHA!
NO! I DON'T GIVE A SHIT ABOUT HUMAN LIVES.
LOOK AT THAT, THOUGH.

TAP TAP

HELLO, I...

...I HEARD WHAT HAPPENED AND--

OH NO YOU DON'T!

DON'T YOU ALL START WITH THE CONDOLENCES! I WASN'T HIS WIFE, AND I WON'T BE HIS WIDOW!

UM.

WHAT IF I WENT AND GOT A BOTTLE OF WINE?

THERE'S AN IDEA.

WHILE YOU'RE AT IT, MAKE IT TWO!

...

BIG SIGH

HUGO...
JILL...

BIG SIGH

?

I DON'T KNOW, I DON'T KNOW, I DON'T KNOW!!

?

WHAT DON'T YOU KNOW, HUGO?

HOW TO APOLOGIZE FOR LAST NIGHT?

?!

NO.

I DON'T KNOW HOW TO GET YOU TO LOVE ME.

HA HA!

I SWEAR! I WAS A BIG-TIME MAOIST BACK IN THE DAY...

I EVEN WENT TO WORK IN A FACTORY, TO LIVE BY MY IDEALS. THE FACTORY BOYS WERE ALL OVER ME, LET ME TELL YOU!

ALL EXCEPT PIERROT, THAT ASSHOLE...

SO OF COURSE IT WAS HIM THAT I FELL FOR!

PIERROT?

THAT'S WHAT WE ALL CALLED HIM IN HIS GLORY DAYS.

HE WAS HANDSOME LIKE YOU CAN'T IMAGINE!

AND A SINGER!

HE HAD THIS DEEP, SMOOTH, SENSUAL VOICE...

I'VE SEEN HIM STRUM ON HIS GUITAR, BUT NEVER SING.

HE EVEN RELEASED A FEW RECORDS.

NOW THAT I'M OLD, SOMETIMES I WONDER:

IS THERE ANYTHING LEFT OF WHAT WE WERE, OR DOES TIME WEAR IT ALL AWAY?

PIERROT

LA GUITARE À Denis

AH-HAH!

FOUND IT!

COVERS OF REGGIANI, IS THIS THE ONE?

PIERROT

YES!

HE'S IN LOVE.

SORRY?

SIMON.

HE'S IN LOVE WITH YOU.

IT'S AS PLAIN AS THE NOSE ON HIS FACE.

AND YOU?

♪ MA FILLE MON ENFANT* ♪

JE VOIS VENIR LE TEMPS OÙ TU VAS ME QUITTER POUR CHANGER DE SAISON POUR CHANGER ♪ D'HABITUDES. ♫

♪ MON ENFANT MON PETIT ♫♫

THIS IS MY FAVORITE OF PIERRE'S ALBUMS.

NOBODY SINGS REGGIANI LIKE HIM...

♫ BONNE ROUTE ♪ BONNE ROUTE ♫♫

♪♪ TU PRENDS LE TRAIN POUR LA VIE ET TON COEUR VA CHANGER DE PAYS. ♪

HE DOES HAVE A BEAUTIFUL VOICE.

I COULD NEVER LISTEN TO HIM PLAY THIS ONE WITHOUT CRYING.

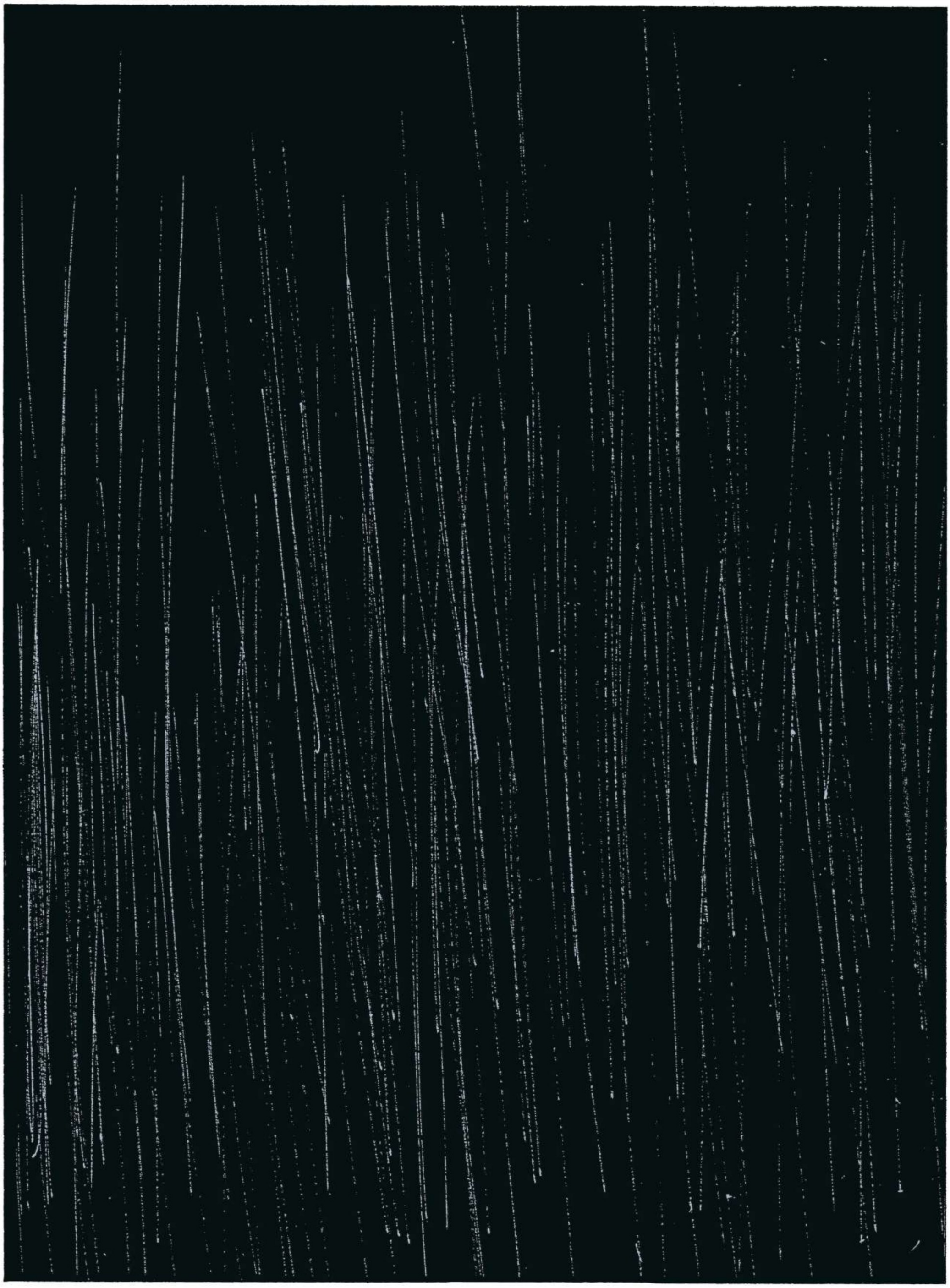
* MY DAUGHTER, MY CHILD / I SEE THE TIME WILL COME / WHEN YOU LEAVE ME ALONE / FOR A CHANGE OF SEASON / FOR A CHANGE OF HOME / FOR A CHANGE OF PACE ... MY CHILD, MY LITTLE GIRL / GODSPEED, GODSPEED / YOU'RE ABOARD THE TRAIN TO LIFE / AND YOUR HEART WILL GO ABROAD.

BONNE ROUTE BONNE ROUTE

WATER'S RISING.

THOSE FOOLS HAVEN'T EVEN NOTICED.

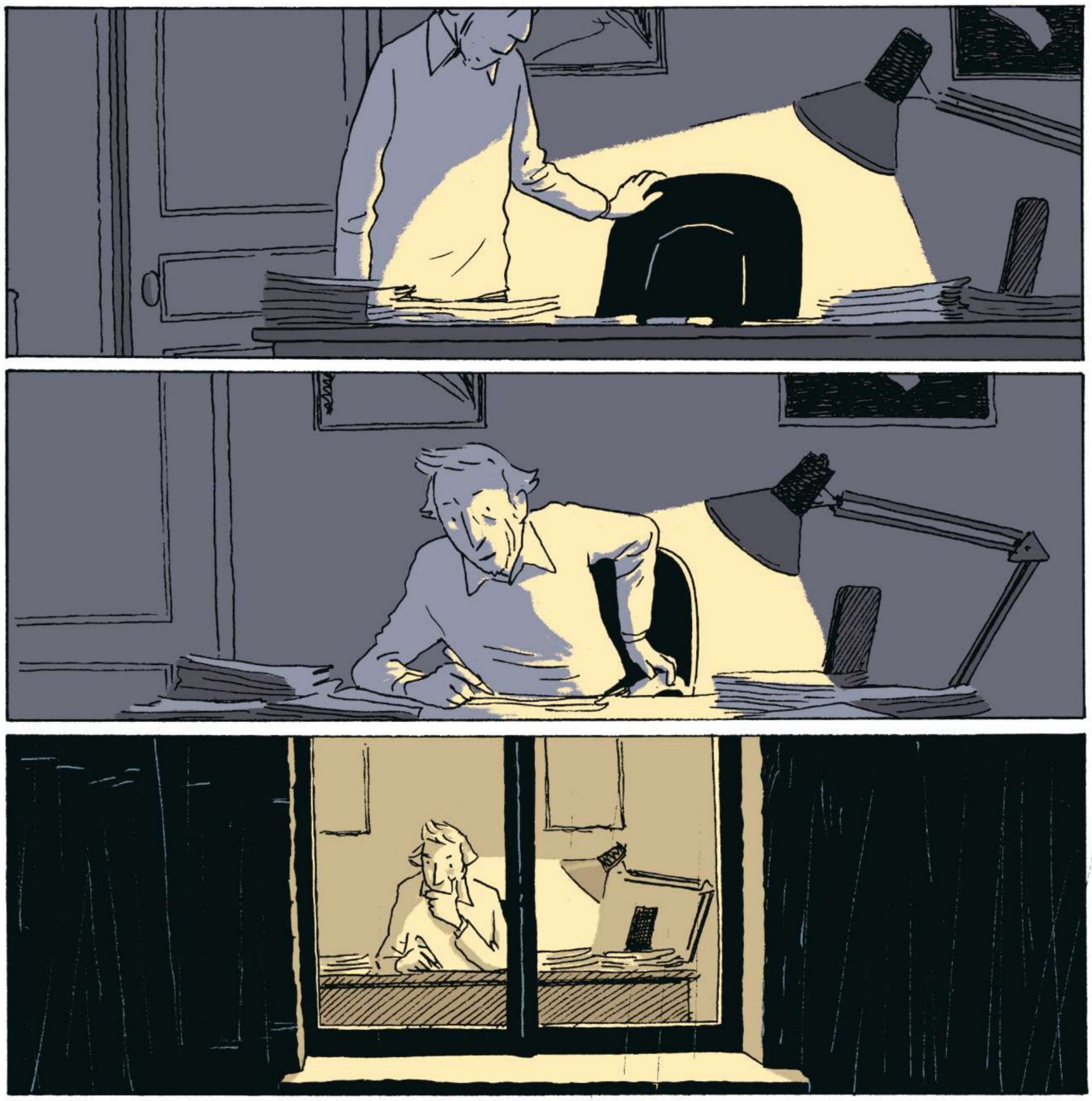
I DON'T CARE FOR YOUR CHEERFUL TONE, CAT.



i don't think you can pick
who you love

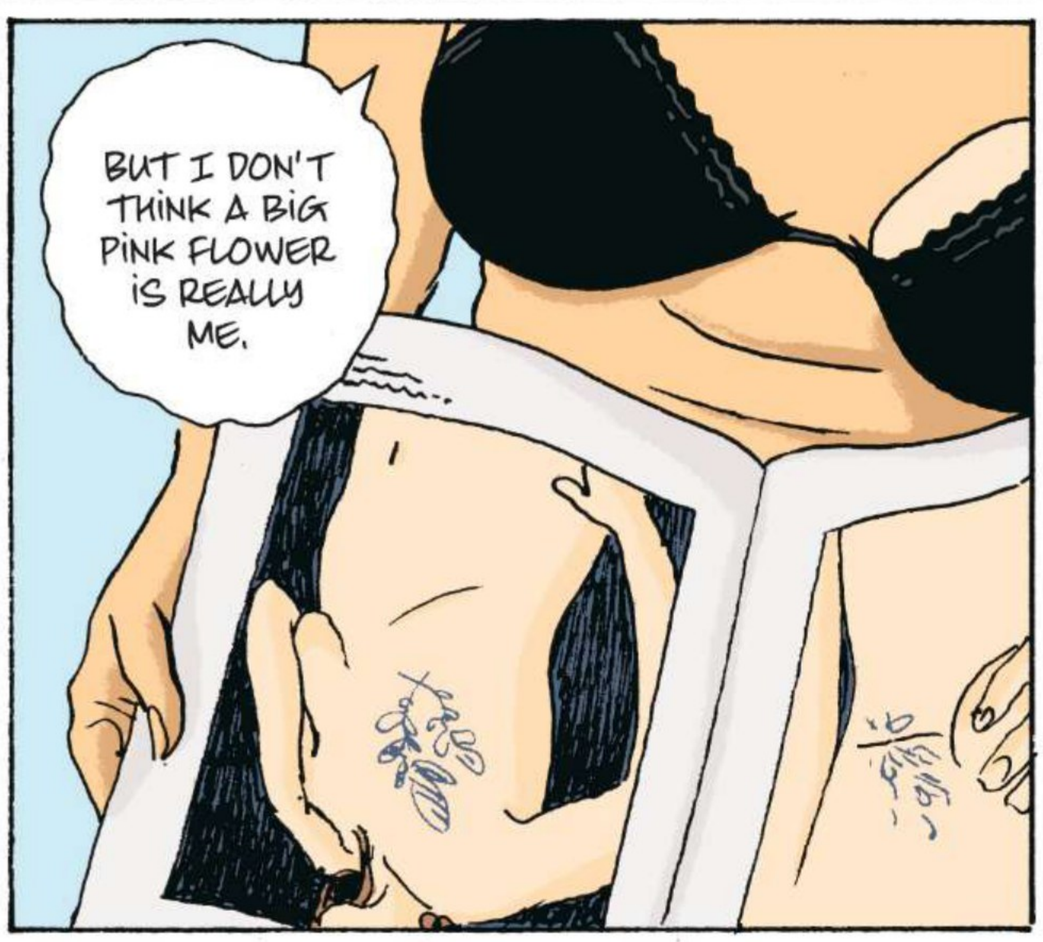
Darling Daughter

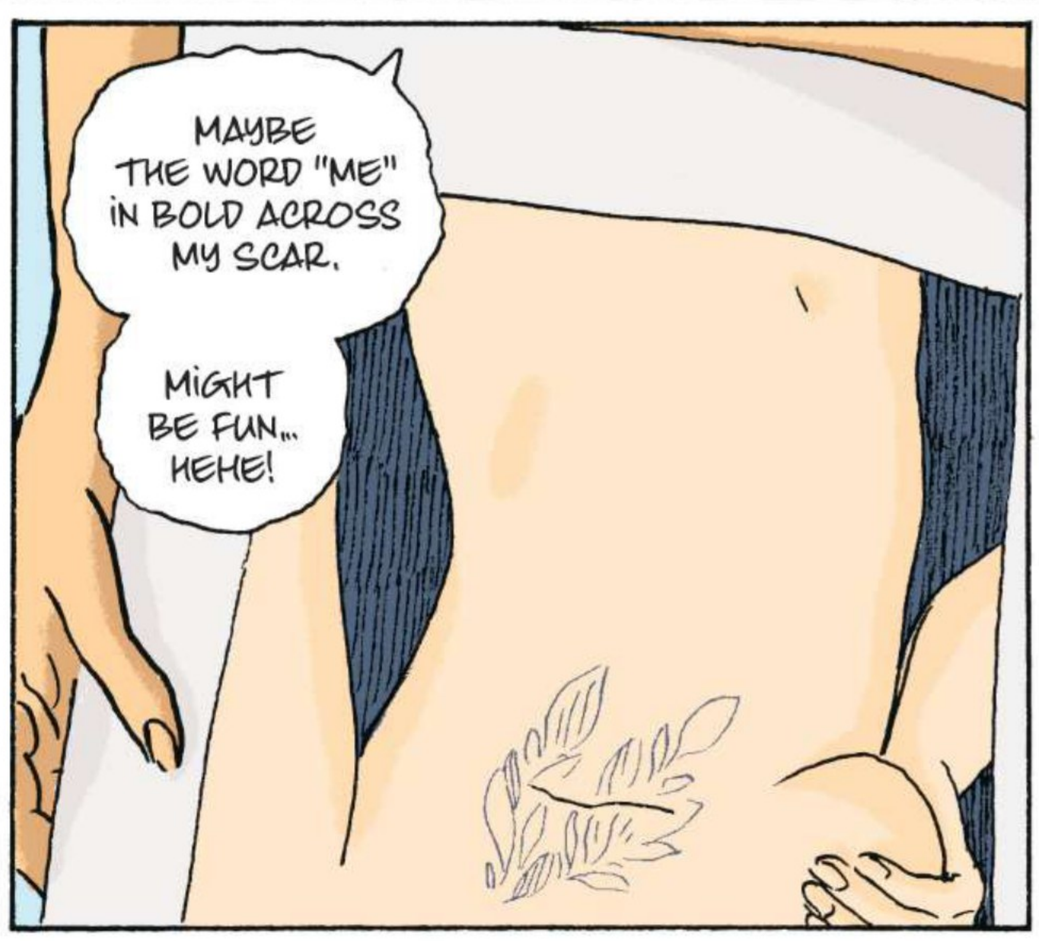
I'm coming. I'll be there in the morning. I won't wait until I'm dead to have this conversation

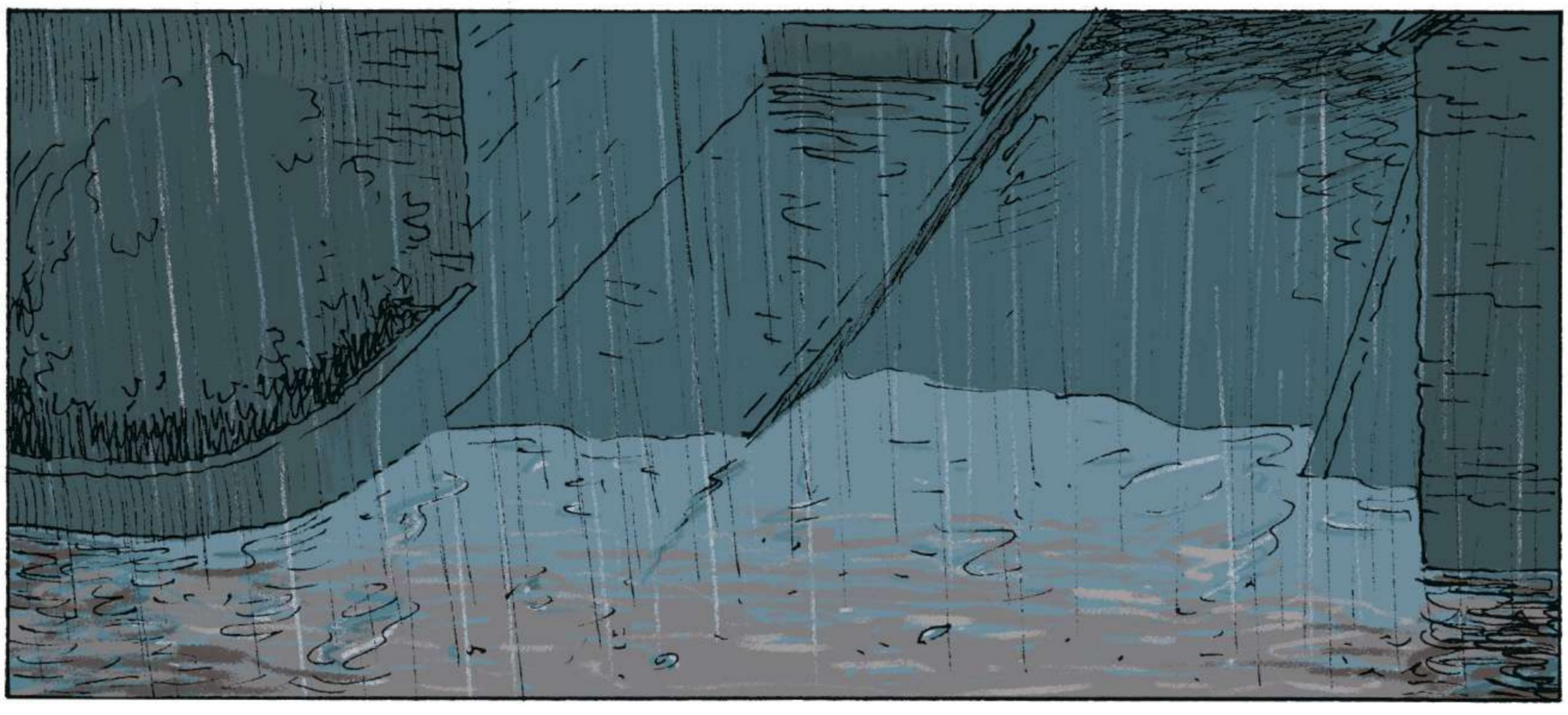


?!
JUST LISTEN FOR A SEC.

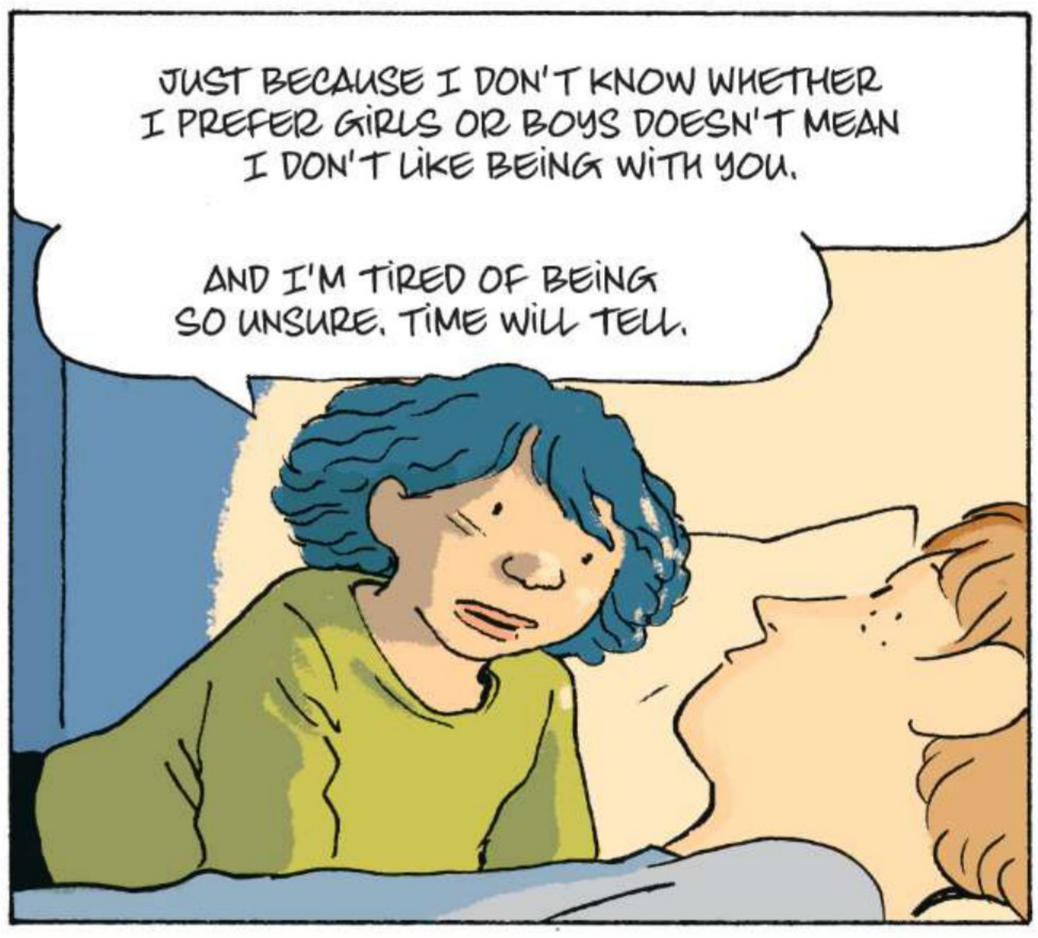
HMM...
NICE.

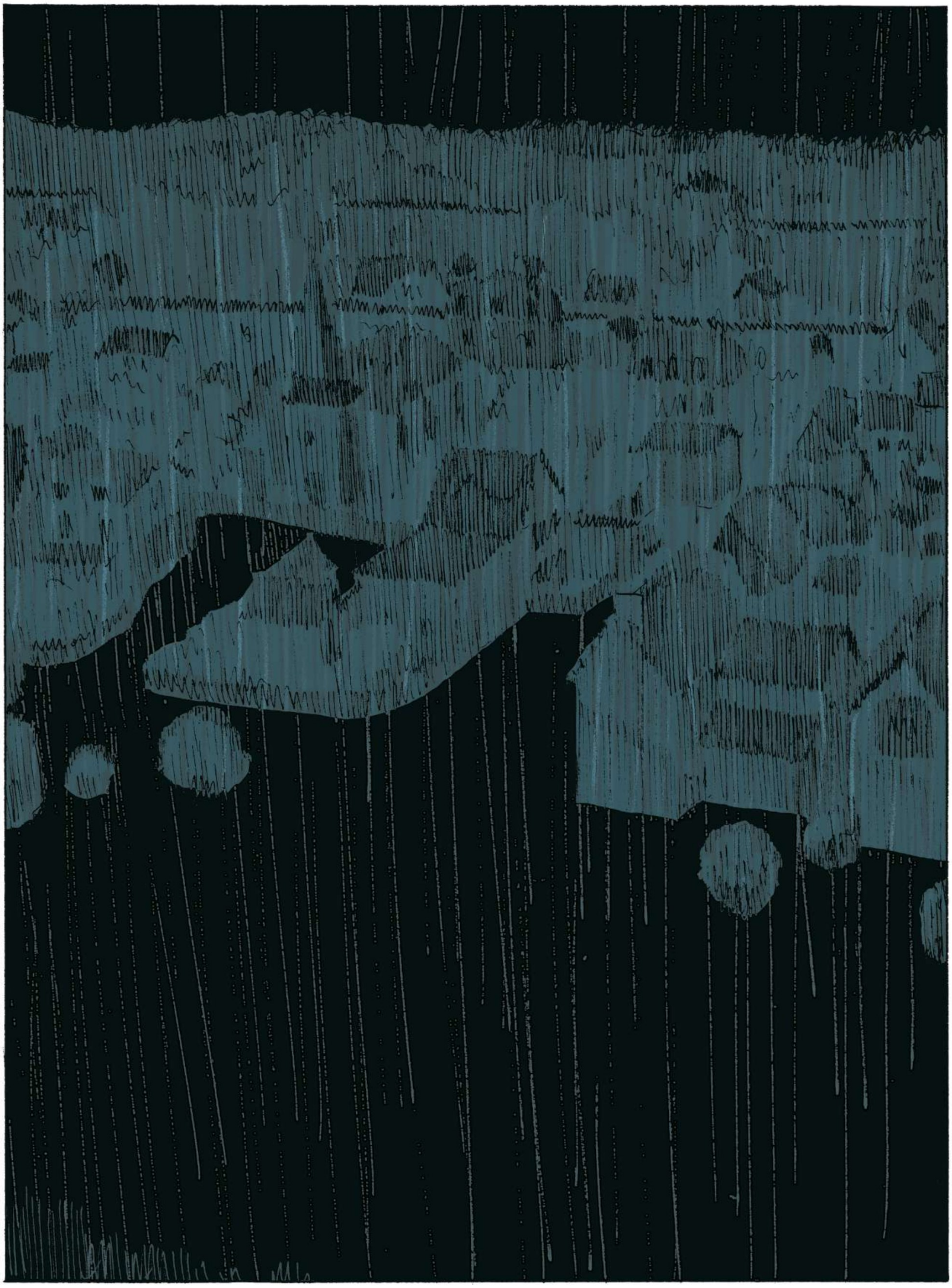

BUT I DON'T THINK A BIG PINK FLOWER IS REALLY ME.

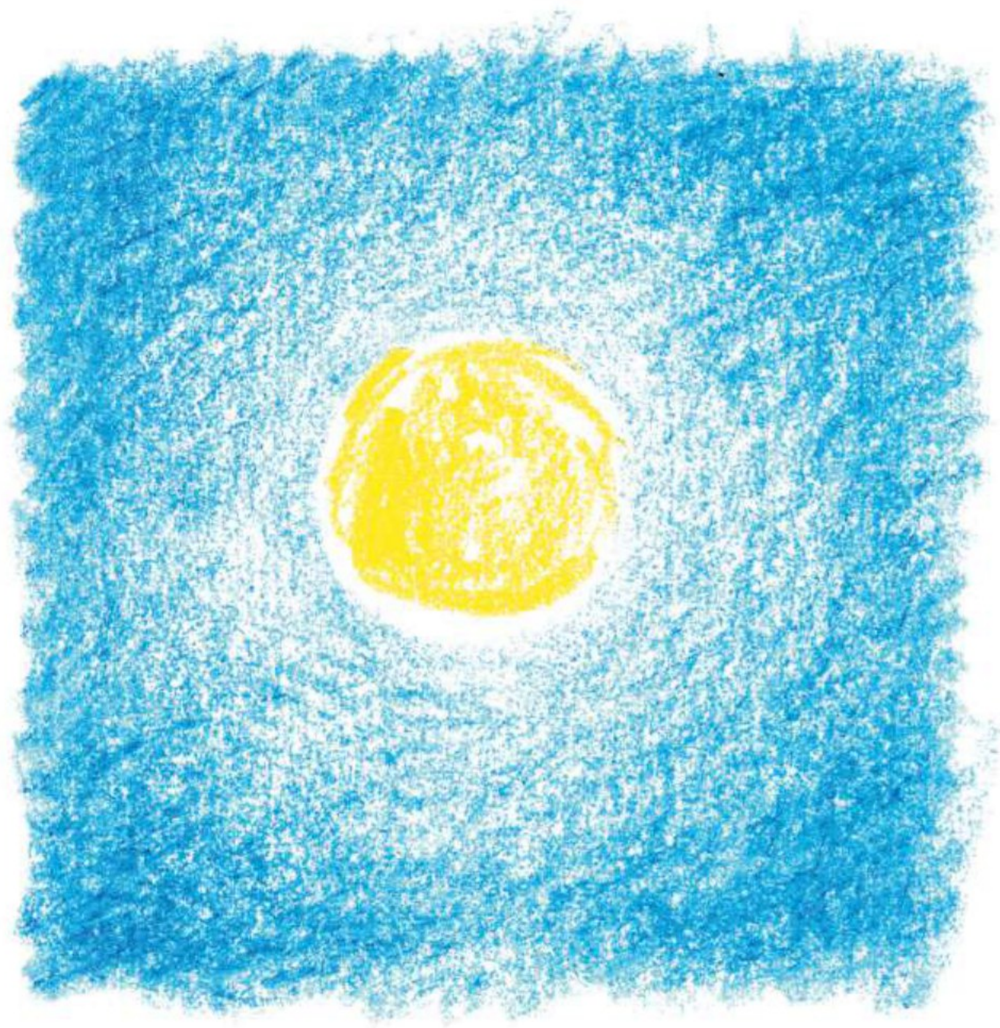

MAYBE THE WORD "ME" IN BOLD ACROSS MY SCAR.
MIGHT BE FUN... HEHE!



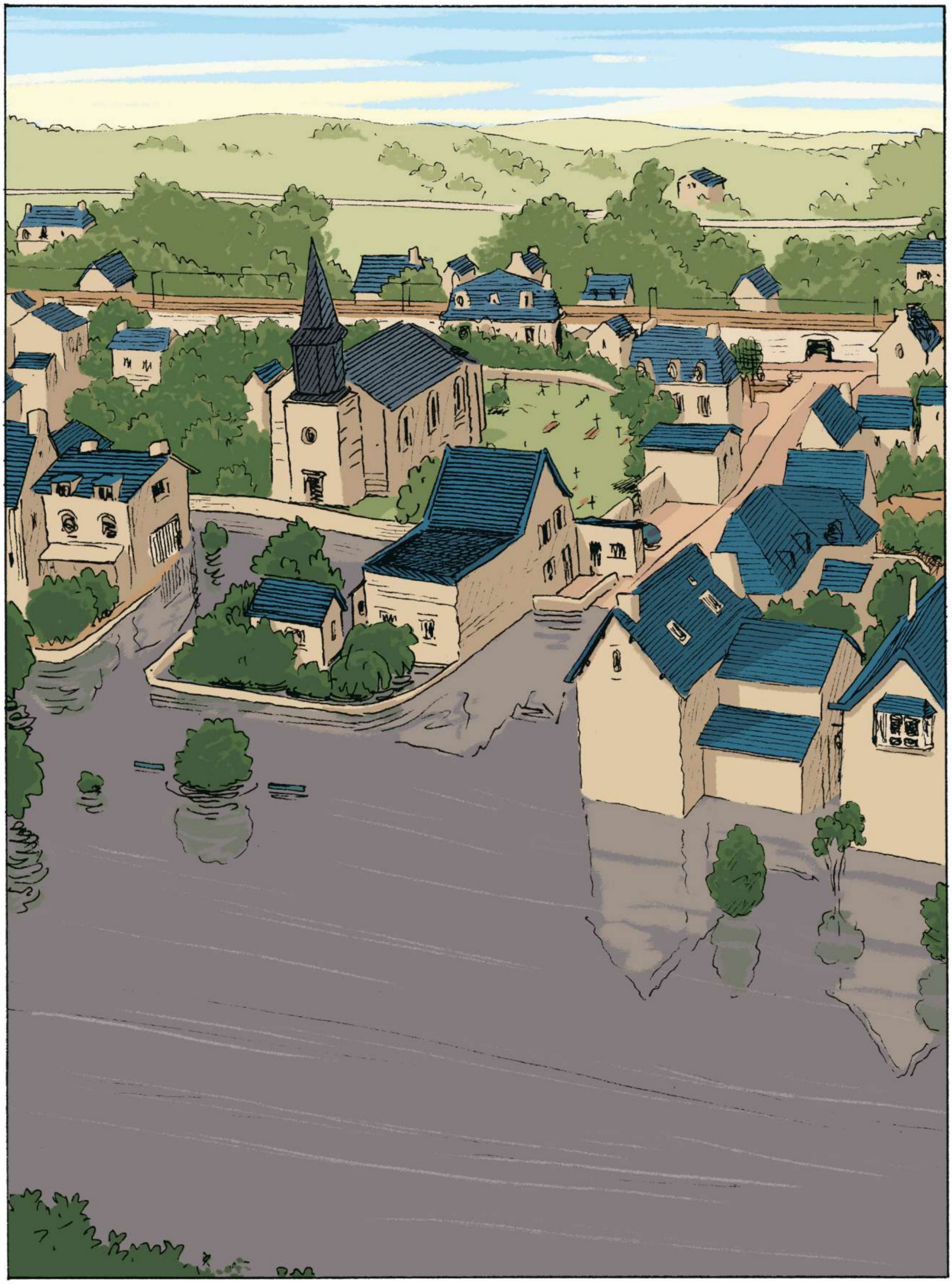
YOU KNOW... I DON'T THINK YOU CAN PICK WHO YOU LOVE.
YEAH...
BUT IT'S HARD TO ACCEPT THAT, BECAUSE IT'S SO IMPORTANT.


JUST BECAUSE I DON'T KNOW WHETHER I PREFER GIRLS OR BOYS DOESN'T MEAN I DON'T LIKE BEING WITH YOU.
AND I'M TIRED OF BEING SO UNSURE. TIME WILL TELL.





i'm happy to have spent some
time in their company



HAHA!

YOUR DARK VEIL HASN'T SPREAD VERY FAR.

YEAH, MAYBE NOT. BUT THIS JUST CONFIRMS THAT HUMANS ARE NOTHING BUT NAVEL-GAZING EGOTISTS WHO DIDN'T EVEN NOTICE THEY WERE ON THE BRINK OF DISASTER.

AND YOU KNOW AS WELL AS I THAT THIS IS ONLY THE BEGINNING.

INDEED, I FEAR THAT SOON, THE ELEMENTS WILL UNLEASH GREATER HORRORS.

YOU MEAN WE ACTUALLY AGREE?!

IT WAS A WASTE OF TIME, WATCHING THEM?

SLAM

...?

SIMON?

YES, I'M GOING BACK.

WELL, NOW...

I DECIDED MAYBE I'M NOT SUCH A BAD TEACHER AFTER ALL.

MAYBE NOT.

KA-THUNK

?

?

OOPS!

UM, Hi.

MORNING.

LOOKS LIKE THERE'S LOVE IN THE AIR.

AND US?

GOOD MORNING, FOLKS!

...

THIS GUY LIVED JUST ACROSS THE STREET, Y'KNOW!

US?

WE'RE NOT SIXTEEN ANYMORE!

STILL, MAYBE WE SHOULDN'T WAIT UNTIL WE'RE IN PIERRE'S POSITION.

MAYBE NOT.

BUT WHATEVER WE DO, WE DO IT SLOW.

I HAVE MORE THAN A MISSING BREAST TO RETHINK.

OK, SO WE'LL TAKE IT SLOW... SLOW SLOW SLOW...

ARG.

VRM

YOU SEE HOW THEY BURY THEIR DEAD?

I LIKE HOW THEY TAKE CARE OF EACH OTHER UP UNTIL THE VERY END. DON'T YOU?

HISSS!

YOU SHOULD TRY TO LOOK AT THE WORLD WITH A LITTLE LESS VENOM, CAT.

I'M HAPPY TO HAVE SPENT SOME TIME IN THEIR COMPANY.

OUR SHARED STORY STRETCHES FROM SHORE TO SHORE...

BUT DID IT SERVE A PURPOSE?

NO!

STORIES MAY NOT HAVE A "PURPOSE," BUT--

SHUT UP!

I DON'T UNDERSTAND YOU!!

THERE'S NOTHING TO UNDERSTAND.

THERE'S JUST...

...LIFE!

The authors would like to thank:
Marion, who let us go where the wind blew us.
Lauren, who knew what we wanted to say before we did.
Martin, for his constant support and stimulating ideas.
Denis, for his keen ear for music and his sharp eye.
Roméo, whose wildlife photos inspired Hugo's.

Before finding her own voice, Diane quoted a number of authors:
P. 7: Henry Bauchau, *Œdipe sur la route*, Actes Sud, 1990.
P. 10: Henry Bauchau, *Déluge*, Actes Sud, 2021 (sometimes attributed to Israeli author Aharon Appelfeld) and *La Grande Muraille*, Actes Sud, 2005.
Pp. 29-30: Jón Kalman Stefánsson tr. Philip Roughton, *Your Absence Is Darkness*, Biblioasis, 2024.
P. 63: Sylvain Tesson, *Une très légère oscillation*, Éditions des Équateurs, 2017.
P. 96: Nancy Huston, *Reflets dans un œil d'homme*, Actes Sud, 2012.
(All translations from French by M.B. Valente)

This book takes place in Belgium, where people like Pierre can legally choose not to suffer through a terminal illness. Not all countries allow that choice.

On pp. 141-142, Diane, Nicole, and Simon listen to Pierre's rendition of "Ma fille," which was originally recorded by Serge Reggiani and written by Eddy Marnay and Raymond Bernard Cohen (© Universal Publishing Group).

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